

TIME WELL SPENT

EMPLOYER-SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING

Research Report
June 2019



NCHO100

FOREWORD

Volunteering has been central to so much of life in Britain that we almost take it granted. Surveys such as NCVO's own *Time Well Spent* tell us that roughly one in four adults volunteer at least once a month for a club, society or organisation.

Stories abound as to the life-changing experience that volunteering opportunities can provide for people – both those volunteering, and those who volunteers are working for or alongside. At its best, volunteering is a positive experience, an opportunity available to all.

This is a story that is being refashioned for our times: a new generation of volunteers want to make a difference to the causes that they believe in. Some want to do this purely in their own time. Others however want to make a difference when at work, whether that is working for an employer with a social purpose, or volunteering through work.

It is little wonder therefore that employers have recognised for some time that supporting their own staff to get involved in the community is good for business and for good causes. It is also good for the staff who volunteer, as this report explores. We should view employer-supported volunteering as a win-win-win national project: good for employers, good for employees, and good for society.

But could it be better? And could volunteering supported by employers make a bigger difference? In fact, is there a case to be made for asking more employers to support their staff to volunteer?

If there is an answer to these questions that has also emerged in recent years, it would almost certainly have been yes, there is more to do. This report therefore explores what better employer-supported volunteering may look like, with the aspiration that we might nurture and grow what might be an increasingly important mechanism by which people get involved.

The report builds on *Time Well Spent*, a major survey of the British public's experience of volunteering. It suggests that volunteering supported by employers is worth getting right, but that this isn't always happening. Building on existing work on corporate volunteering, the report looks at employer-supported volunteering first and foremost through the eyes of the volunteer. The aspiration is to improve practice around employer-supported volunteering.

The message from this report is clear: employer-supported volunteering needs to start with why people want to volunteer, even if that doesn't quite fit with what we want as employers or volunteer-involving organisations. We then need to improve how employers and volunteer-involving organisations work together so that they can make the experience of getting involved a good one. A bad experience of volunteering will inevitably put people off in the future.

Finally, we should all remember the reasons why we want people to get involved: to make a difference to the causes we all care about. Employer-supported volunteering can make a bigger impact on society, and I hope that this report contributes to discussions as to how it can do so.



Peter Kellner
Chair, NCVO

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1. AT A GLANCE

This section provides an overview of each of the main sections of this report, including a summary of key findings.

Introduction

Section 2 provides background to the report, including key aims and how the research looks to build on previous evidence.

This report on employer-supported volunteering (ESV), also known as corporate volunteering, is the first in a series of focused reports building on our *Time Well Spent* research, which looks at the volunteer experience.

This research aims to provide an updated picture of ESV and to look at the issues involved through the perspectives of all groups involved – importantly that of the volunteer, which has often been omitted. This research has been produced in partnership with the Corporate Volunteering Network (CVN), a peer network of volunteer-involving organisations and brokers involved in ESV.

What does ESV participation look like?

Section 3 explores levels of participation in ESV, who gets involved and how they participate

- ESV makes up a small part of volunteer participation overall, but some volunteer-involving organisations and brokers perceive an increased demand for ESV in recent years.
- ESV volunteers are more likely to be younger, male, and from urban areas. The volunteer-involving organisations and employers involved in ESV are more likely to be larger organisations.
- There are many different forms of ESV, often depending on the degree of employer involvement. ESV volunteers are typically involved in more of a light-touch way compared with non-ESV volunteers, most commonly in events-related activities. ESV volunteers are also more likely to be online as part of their volunteering.

- Around half of ESV volunteers use their professional or occupational skills in their volunteering, but many also contribute wider skills and experience.
- Responsibility for the organising and managing of ESV varies across different roles and teams within employers and volunteer-involving organisations. However, ESV is rarely a high priority.

What are the main motivations for getting involved in ESV?

Section 4 looks at motivations for participating in ESV among volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations and employers and the impacts of differing motivations across these groups

- ESV volunteers (as with non-ESV volunteers), volunteer-involving organisations and employers all have a common aim of wanting to improve things and help people.
- However, these different groups of stakeholders also have a range of other motivations, which can shape the way they participate in ESV and what they prioritise.

This can lead to tensions and negative perceptions, but where they focus on shared values, ESV works best.

How do volunteers experience ESV?

Section 5 explores ESV volunteers' experiences, including overall perceptions and specific views on volunteer support and management. It also explores the perceived benefits of ESV among volunteers.

- ESV volunteers are largely positive about their experience. However, ESV volunteers report lower levels of satisfaction compared with non-ESV volunteers, and are more likely to feel like their volunteering could be better organised, is too bureaucratic and feels too much like paid work.
- These findings on the volunteer experience broadly resonate with volunteer-involving organisations, employers and brokers. While they cite many examples of ESV working well, the less positive views are not seen as surprising and are thought to be linked primarily to volunteers' expectations and sense of choice.

- ESV volunteers report the same benefits from volunteering as non-ESV volunteers, but are slightly less likely to be positive.

What are the key challenges facing ESV?

Section 6 explores a number of key challenges facing ESV and considers what might be holding ESV back.

While volunteer-involving organisations, employers and brokers largely have positive experiences of ESV, feedback from these groups suggests that there are a number of issues which continue to hold ESV back.

Current uptake and future interest in ESV are low

- The findings suggest that key barriers include lack of awareness, availability and encouragement of opportunities.
- Competing work pressures also make it challenge for employers to engage employees and plan ESV activities.
- For some employees, ESV is simply not of interest, but this can be due to perceptions of some opportunities, particularly skilled-based opportunities, as being exclusive.

ESV volunteers tend to be less positive than non-ESV volunteers

- The findings indicate that volunteer-involving organisations and employers may not be investing in volunteers and their experience.

- Furthermore, the restrictive and short-term nature of some ESV arrangements can limit the benefits gained by ESV volunteers.
- The blurred boundaries between work and volunteering are likely to contribute to ESV feeling more formalised and ‘work-like’.

A mismatch of needs and expectations can create barriers to effective ESV relationships

- Relationships between those involved in managing ESV are impacted by different internal needs and priorities which can pull stakeholders in different directions.
- Issues around cost, an area of particular tension, highlight wider gaps in understanding between volunteer-involving organisations and employers.

Volunteering opportunities of most benefit to volunteer-involving organisations are not those most popular among employers

- Requests for resource-heavy and low-impact volunteering often stems from a lack of understanding of what volunteering is (it is frequently equated with team-building).
- Furthermore, while skills-based opportunities are often of most value to volunteer-involving organisations, not all volunteers are interested in these types of opportunities or feel they have professional or occupational skills to offer.
- Within both volunteer-involving organisations and employer organisations, the focus on numbers of volunteers as the

key measure of success can lead to less impactful opportunities.

Levels of engagement and participation in ESV are lower in smaller organisations

- While there is a willingness to get smaller organisations (both as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and volunteer-involving organisations) on board, practical barriers of limited human and financial resources, continue to stall their involvement.
- Additionally, the findings indicate that the focus on larger organisations mean that currently, ESV does not always fit with what SMEs and smaller volunteer-involving organisations can take on or offer.

What might the next five years look like for ESV?

Section 7 looks at what the next five years might look like for ESV, including what might impact on it.

- Research participants perceived that the demand for ESV from organisations (employers and volunteer-involving organisations alike) would continue to grow, but that the environment it operates in is likely to get tougher.
- Expectations on employers to be responsible businesses and to do more to look after and incentivise employees, may help to drive ESV forward, potentially in new and different ways. Wider societal

shifts including more flexible working arrangements and advances in technology are also likely to change the way ESV is delivered.

- These changes may prompt questions about where ESV is best placed to meet needs. Where volunteer-involving organisations choose to be involved, they may need to adapt and evolve to maximise the benefits of ESV.

How might we prepare ESV for the future?

Section 8 looks at how organisations might better prepare for the future, with suggestions on what might help ESV move forward in five key areas. It includes some case examples to illustrate the findings.

How might we better engage volunteers in ESV?

The findings suggest that volunteers could be better engaged by:

- **making ESV as easy and flexible as possible** - flexible arrangements such as volunteering near the office or remotely, and employers being more flexible about how employees are able to give their time, may support current and potential volunteers to fit volunteering around competing work priorities.
- **making it more ‘personal’** - volunteers should feel that they have freely chosen to

participate in causes that are meaningful to them, they should feel prepared for their volunteering activities, actively involved in shaping opportunities and supported to find their own opportunities.

- **building connections with volunteers** – volunteer-involving organisations and employers need to invest the same time and effort into relationships with volunteers, as they do with one another. ESV volunteers may not initially look for long-term involvement but where engaged effectively, they can go on to be involved in different and more impactful ways.

How might we make ESV more inclusive?

The findings suggest that ESV could be made more inclusive by:

- **ensuring a broad range of opportunities are on offer** – employers recognise that volunteering should meet different needs and preferences.
- **adopting a wider definition of skills and experiences** – recognising and valuing a broader range of skills and experiences may help to address the perception of ESV as exclusive and allow more people to contribute in different ways.
- **recognising the unique contribution of smaller organisations and making ESV more ‘small friendly’** – SMEs and smaller volunteer-involving organisations have unique advantages but more needs to be done to ensure they can participate.

How might we create a more positive ESV culture?

The findings suggest that employers and volunteer-involving organisations could focus on:

- **having ESV champions at different levels** – while a committed lead is essential in driving ESV forward, wider buy-in is needed to support and legitimise ESV.
- **promoting values and benefits** – regular communication internally and celebrating the difference volunteers make can help boost the profile of ESV within organisations.
- **ensuring ESV is joined up to other parts of the organisation** – including its processes, structures and strategies, may help to ensure ESV has a ‘place’ and purpose in the organisation.

How can organisations involved in ESV work better together?

The findings suggest that those involved in ESV could work better together by:

- **recognising one size does not fit all** – while long term partnership has its advantages, employers need to balance different needs, therefore volunteer-involving organisations should be open to different partnership models. Brokers could help them to find suitable matches.
- **having honest, upfront communications** – volunteer-involving organisations need to be clearer about what works and have the confidence to say no, which can

increase wider understanding about what it takes to organise ESV opportunities that are impactful. Again, brokers can support this.

- **being willing to adapt** – employers not coming with a set, prescribed idea of ESV and volunteer-involving organisations doing more to understand the employer context can help build more effective relationships.

How might we make ESV more impactful?

The findings suggest that ESV could be made more impactful by:

- **promoting a greater understanding of volunteering** – findings suggest volunteer-involving organisations and brokers could better support employers to identify and address their primary motivations for ESV.
- **focusing on shared values** – previous recommendations have focused on employers and volunteer-involving organisations finding common ground to build their relationship. But there is more to consider, including volunteer motivations and the needs of beneficiaries. Focusing on shared values, driven by an ESV strategy could help ensure opportunities are impactful.
- **recognising that impacts can be realised in different ways** – instead of focusing on a specific type of ESV opportunity (for instance, skills-based) those involved in delivering ESV should be open-minded in *how* they can make a difference, and meet different needs and priorities.

- **rethinking measures of success** – organisations can challenge current measures such as number of volunteers and hours and look at multiple types of impact, drawing on wider collaboration and support where needed.

What could organisations involved in managing and delivering ESV consider for the future?

The report concludes by posing a number of questions for volunteer-involving organisations, employers and brokers to consider. These have drawn on some key insights from this research to prompt those involved in managing and delivering ESV:

- to explore how volunteers could be better engaged in light of the finding which shows that despite the lack of previous focus on the ESV volunteer experience, it plays a key role and needs to be taken into account more.
- to look at identifying and focusing on shared values and purpose in light of the findings which show the need to navigate the different motivations at play and balance different needs and priorities.
- to look within their own organisations and not only at external relationships in light of the findings that show the importance of ESV having internal support, through a dedicated strategy, a structure which connects ESV with the rest of the organisation’s activities, and the buy-in of colleagues who understand the value and benefit of ESV.

2. INTRODUCTION

This section provides background to this report. It outlines the key aims and approach to the research and how it seeks to build on previous evidence. It also includes a short note on definitions.

2.1. About this report

Our recent *Time Well Spent* research report captured the national experience of volunteering for the first time in over a decade. Based on a wide-ranging online survey of over 10,000 members of the British public, supported by sector stakeholders, it ultimately considered the question of ‘*what makes a quality volunteer experience?*’ and how we might better engage potential volunteers for the future.

The research also highlighted some key challenges facing the voluntary sector. This report on employer-supported volunteering (ESV), also known as corporate volunteering, is the first in a series of focused reports building on *Time Well Spent*, dedicated to further exploring some of these issues in more depth. For this report, NCVO partnered with the Corporate Volunteering

Network (CVN), a peer network of charities and brokers involved in ESV.

The report draws on further analysis of the *Time Well Spent* data, existing and recent evidence from the literature, and new research carried out with employers, volunteer-involving organisations and brokers. It aims to fill gaps in knowledge and incorporate previously unexplored perspectives to create an updated picture of ESV.

2.2. Background

ESV has steadily increased in popularity as a means for volunteering since the 2000s - both as an employer-led initiative and a government-promoted civil service scheme. With volunteering made a priority under prime minister David Cameron’s ‘big society’ vision, ESV gained a political boost in 2015 through a Conservative party manifesto pledge to introduce three days of annual paid volunteering leave for those employed in companies with over 250 people. This also led to an increase in research activity in this area, including CIPD’s report, ‘On the brink of a game-changer?’ and others.

The years following saw a decline in political enthusiasm for ESV, reflected in the government’s failure to implement the 2015 manifesto pledge. With this decrease in focus on ESV, there has also been a widening gap in research evidence in the ESV landscape. This research looks to fill this gap and explores what ESV looks like now.

This is all the more relevant in the context of a changing landscape. The demand for flexible opportunities is increasing, as is the focus on addressing the lack of diversity in volunteering. There are also wider societal shifts, including more remote working arrangements, a younger generation of employees placing greater value in working for a responsible business, and advances in technology. This research seeks to consider ESV against this backdrop and understand how it might be affected by these developments.

Finally, previous research has tended to focus more on the relationship between employers and volunteer-involving organisations, and little on the experience of volunteers (ie employees) themselves. As the key aim of the *Time Well Spent* research was to shed light on the experience of volunteering from the perspective of the volunteer, this report also looks to do this in the context of ESV.

2.3. Overall aims

The primary aim of this report is to create an updated picture of ESV that builds on *Time Well Spent* and other evidence, and to fill gaps, in particular, by including the perspective of volunteers. This does not mean that everything in this report claims to be new. Rather, where findings resonate with previous research, it looks at why things have not changed, and consider the issues from a number of different perspectives.

Specific research aims are to:

- explore the **context and landscape of ESV**, including key challenges
- explore the **ESV experience**, including the organisation of ESV, volunteer opportunities, and relationships between those involved
- consider the different **motivations for getting involved** and the **benefits and impacts** of ESV
- look at **wider awareness, participation and engagement** with ESV.

The research aims to inform ESV practice and consider key opportunities for improving the ESV experience and impacts for all groups involved, going forward.

2.4. Our approach

The research draws on a number of different data sources, summarised below. More detail can be found in the appendix.

1. *Time Well Spent* - a national survey of 10,103 people on the volunteer experience

- It draws both on the *Time Well Spent* research report published in 2019, as well as further analysis of the dataset focusing on recent ESV volunteers.

2. A range of research and literature on ESV, including:

- *The Current State of Corporate Volunteering – a third sector perspective* (CVN, 2018)
- *On the brink of a game changer* (CIPD, 2015)

3. Primary research carried out specifically for this report:

- Qualitative research (interviews, workshops) and written feedback:
 - **volunteer-involving organisations** (one workshop, nine written feedback forms)
 - **employers** (one workshop, seven telephone interviews, four written feedback forms)
 - **brokers** (six telephone interviews, 10 written feedback forms)
- Round-table discussion with volunteer-involving organisations, employers, and brokers discussing emerging findings.

Our overall approach to this research is defined by a number of key features

It looks to build on previous evidence by:

- looking beyond the external relationship between employers and volunteer-involving organisations, and also considering the internal relationships within these groups, as well as the volunteer perspective
- putting more focus on the motivations behind ESV and its impacts
- exploring the state of ESV now (especially since 2015), drawing on recent research and considering the wider, changing environment impacting on ESV
- seeking to understand barriers to progress and other contributing factors to key challenges faced.

It takes a 360° view:

- It captures the different perspectives of those involved – employers, volunteer-involving organisations, brokers, and importantly volunteers (employees).

It is informed by our stakeholders:

As with our main *Time Well Spent* research, stakeholder engagement was central to the development of this research on ESV. Input from our partners, the Corporate Volunteering Network, played a key role in shaping our priorities for the work and allowing us to engage with those involved with ESV ‘on the ground’ throughout the project. A round-table discussion with a variety of stakeholders

following emerging findings also shaped implications for practice.

2.5. A note on definitions

In this report, we will use the term ‘Employer-Supported Volunteering’ (shortened to ESV) throughout. ESV is often referred to by other names – such as employer-sponsored volunteering or corporate volunteering. By ESV, we refer to:

Volunteering where employers actively support or have schemes for employees to give unpaid help to a group, club or organisation either by giving them time during working hours or organising volunteering activities for them. It does not refer to schemes for giving money.

This is based on the main definition used in our *Time Well Spent* research. Varied definitions are used when referring to ESV, which makes comparisons across different pieces of research challenging, and survey findings do not present data on ESV consistently (eg based on different sub-groups - recent volunteers, employed people etc). Throughout the report, where definitions deviate substantially from that outlined above, it will be noted.

The report also makes reference throughout to various groups involved in ESV. The following terms will be used for short-hand, with more detail on each outlined below:

- **‘Volunteers’:** employees or workers giving unpaid help to organisations, either during working hours supported by their employer or through employer-organised activities.

In this report, they may also be referred to as ‘employees’.

- **‘Employers’:** organisations who support or have schemes for employees or workers to give unpaid help to an organisation, either giving them time during working hours to volunteer or organising activities for them. Here, it refers primarily to private sector organisations, but a small number of other types of organisation (public sector, charities) were included.
- **‘Volunteer-involving organisations’:** organisations (mostly working with, or indirectly supported by employers) to whom ESV volunteers give unpaid help. These primarily relate to charities, but some public sector organisations were also engaged.
- **‘Brokers’:** intermediary organisations (eg volunteer centres) involved in matching opportunities between employers and/or volunteer-involving organisations and managing ESV opportunities on their behalf.

3. WHAT DOES ESV PARTICIPATION LOOK LIKE?

This section explores the levels of participation in ESV, including changes over time, who gets involved, and what participation looks like – from the perspective of volunteers, employers and volunteer-involving organisations.

3.1. What are the levels of ESV participation?

ESV makes up a small part of volunteer participation overall

Only 10% of recent volunteers (those giving time in the last 12 months) who took part in our *Time Well Spent* survey reported that their volunteering was through ESV¹. Other estimates of ESV participation vary – the 2016/17 *Community Life Survey*² reported 6% of all survey respondents volunteering through ESV within the previous year. Older reports³ suggest that between a quarter and a third of employees who have a scheme available to them participate at least once a year.

Differing definitions of ESV and ways of reporting the data (as outlined in section 2.5) make it difficult to make comparisons across these surveys⁴, but all suggest relatively low levels of engagement overall.

ESV participation levels have broadly increased over the last decade, but with less clear evidence in recent years

The most reliable data tracking ESV participation levels over time broadly shows an increase over the last decade: people who took part in ESV in the previous 12 months increased from 5% in 2008/09 to 8% in 2015/16.⁵ However, there is less clear evidence for recent years, in part due to a change of survey methodology and ESV not being included in the most recent survey.

In our qualitative research carried out for this report, many of the volunteer-involving organisations and brokers perceived growing numbers of requests for ESV over recent

years, which had increased their focus in this area.

‘Going back a few years we would get the odd enquiry and send details out to our network...the volume of enquiries has now increased which made us recognise that we need to have a less hands-off approach and get more involved.’ (Broker)

This perceived increase in demand suggests that new employers are getting involved in ESV for the first time. It is also likely to reflect existing organisations growing their ESV offer. For example, a university was looking to extend its volunteering programme for students to its staff on a more formal basis than previously, to support staff development and to make a bigger impact on their local community.

It remains a mixed picture, however. A recent survey⁶ reported a decrease in the proportion of volunteer-involving organisations receiving employee volunteers from 82% in 2015 to 75% in 2017. At the same time, it highlights the need for ESV volunteers is increasing (82% said they needed employee volunteers in 2015, increasing to 93% in 2017).

3.2. Who is more likely to get involved in ESV?

ESV volunteers are more likely to be younger, male and from urban areas

Looking at the demographic profile of recent ESV volunteers from *Time Well Spent* data, including comparison with non-ESV volunteers⁷, a number of key features are highlighted.

¹ Where volunteers did more than one type of volunteering, this related to where ESV was their main volunteering

² DCMS (2017), *Community Life Survey*

³ This draws on various surveys, cited in CIPD (2015), *On the Brink of a Gamechanger?*

⁴ For example, the *Community Life Survey* includes schemes for giving money in their definition of ESV

⁵ DCMS (2009)/ (2016) *Community Life Survey*

⁶ *Three Hands* (2018), *Employee Volunteering: Is it working for charities?*

⁷ Non-ESV volunteers exclude those who have never had a job

ESV volunteers are:

- **more likely to be younger:** as shown in chart 1, the highest proportion of ESV volunteers were in the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups, and of a younger age profile compared with non-ESV volunteers. This is likely to reflect the age of the working population as well as the older demographic profile of the wider volunteering population.
- **more likely to be male:** there was a higher proportion of male than female ESV volunteers (59% vs 42%). Furthermore, ESV volunteers were more likely to be male compared with non-ESV volunteers (59% ESV vs 45% non-ESV). This may relate to working patterns.
- **more likely to live in urban areas:** there was also a higher proportion of urban ESV volunteers compared with non-ESV volunteers (83% vs 75%). This is likely to relate to the younger age profile of ESV volunteers and the fact that larger organisations offering ESV may be more likely to be based in urban areas.
- **more varied in relation to both ethnicity and disability:** compared with non-ESV volunteers there was a higher proportion of disabled (38% ESV vs 33% non-ESV) and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) ESV volunteers (16% ESV vs 4% non-ESV). However, some caution needs to be taken in interpreting these due to lower

base sizes, and the BAME findings in particular are likely to relate to the younger age profile of BAME volunteers generally.

Larger employers and volunteer-involving organisations are more likely to be involved in ESV

Our *Time Well Spent* research supports previous evidence⁸ that larger employers are more likely to provide ESV opportunities than small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Those who worked for an employer and were aware of ESV opportunities were more likely to work for an employer with more than 250 employees, with the highest proportion being those working for an employer with over 1000 employees (37%).

The recent CVN survey of volunteer-involving organisations⁹ shows that larger volunteer-involving organisations are also more likely to be involved in ESV than smaller organisations: 80% of the surveyed organisations with more than fifty employees had engaged in ESV compared with around half (51%) of volunteer-involving organisations with up to five employees. Similar findings emerged when looking by income level.

Previous research has recommended that smaller employers and volunteer-involving organisations would benefit from getting involved¹⁰, but this continues to be seen as a challenge. More on this can be found in section 6.6.

3.3. How do volunteers participate in ESV?

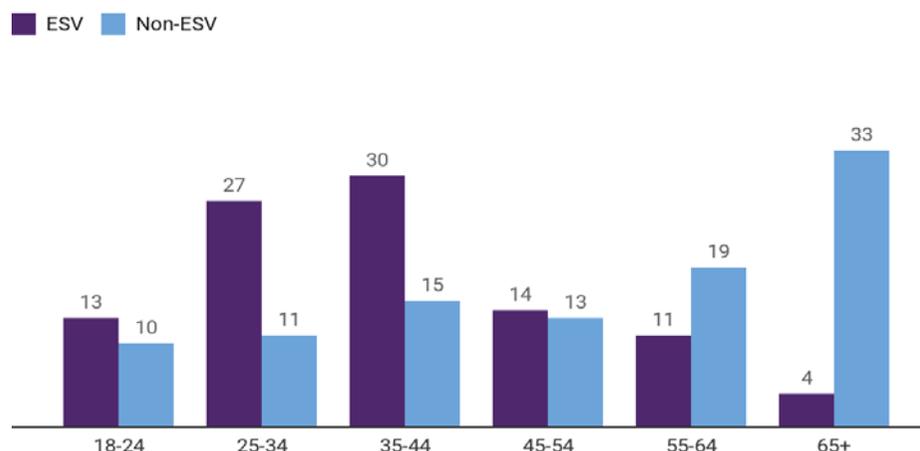
There are different forms of ESV - with varying degrees of employer involvement

As highlighted in the introduction to this report, there are numerous definitions of ESV. This reflects its varied nature. Key variations are listed below.

ESV varies according to:

- whether the employer organises the activity or gives employees time during their working hours to organise their own volunteering: recent ESV volunteers surveyed in the *Time Well Spent* research broadly break down into the following groups (note, they could select more than one option): 26% volunteered during their work hours, organised by their employer, 36% volunteered outside of their work hours but organised by their employer and 53% volunteered during working hours and given time to participate, not organised by their employer
- the type of volunteering activities eg practical, skills-based
- how volunteers participate eg as a group or individual
- the length and nature of their engagement, eg one-off event, long term

Chart 1: Age profile of volunteers (% of ESV and non-ESV volunteers)



Source: *Time Well Spent* • Created with Datawrapper

⁸ For example, Rochester, C. and Thomas, B. (2006) Measuring the impact of employer supported

volunteering: an exploratory study, estimated 70% of FTSE 100 companies had an ESV programme

⁹ CVN (2018), The Current State of Corporate Volunteering – a third sector perspective

¹⁰ CIPD, 2015

A key factor determining these different ‘models’ of ESV was the degree of flexibility employers allowed. Some employers allowed volunteers to choose how they gave their time, whereas others had more restrictive conditions, such as only being able to volunteer through specified programmes or on a specific day.

‘One of the employers we work with give their staff 56 hours per year to volunteer and they can do this in whatever chunks of time they choose - so they can take up a mentor or coaching role.’
(Volunteer-involving organisation)

There are a number of ways in which ESV volunteers are more likely to participate

Despite the variations outlined above, *Time Well Spent* findings highlight that there are some ways ESV volunteers are more likely to get involved:

Less frequent engagement was more common among ESV volunteers compared with non-ESV volunteers

Although frequent volunteering was common, ESV volunteers were more likely to be involved on an infrequent basis (less than once a month) compared with non-ESV volunteers (36% vs 27%) as well as in projects on a time-

limited basis (17% vs 13%). They were also less likely to have a longstanding relationship with the organisation they were volunteering for – 71% had volunteered for the first time with the organisation within the last five years, compared with 53% of non-ESV volunteers.

ESV volunteers are involved in a range of activities - most commonly events-related

As seen in chart 2, the most common activities among ESV volunteers were organising or helping to run an activity of event (30%) and raising money and taking part in sponsored events (25%) - activities generally

more suited to less frequent engagement which support the findings outlined previously (note, respondents could select more than one answer).

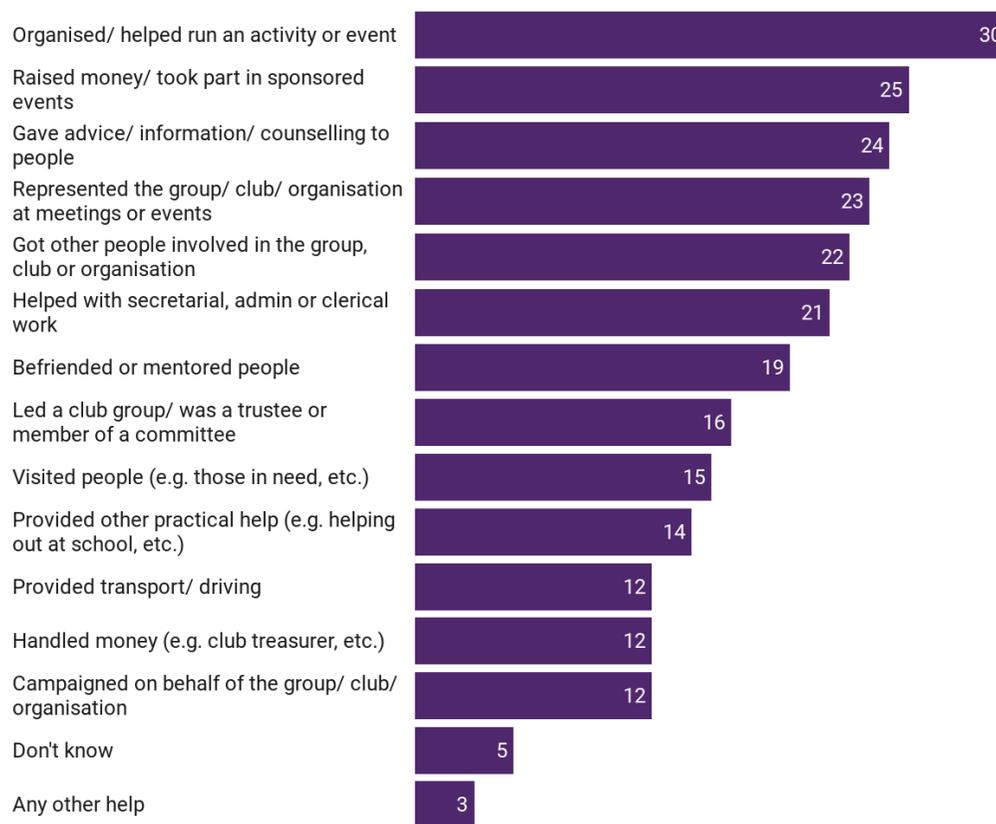
These activities mostly took place in volunteers’ own neighbourhood (70%), however a significant minority of just under a third of ESV volunteers (31%) said they volunteered in the UK, but outside their own neighbourhood (note respondents could select multiple locations). This is likely to reflect that volunteers giving time through ESV may be participating close to their workplace which may not be the same area as their home.

As with the range of activities undertaken, ESV volunteers support a variety of causes: children’s education/ schools (23%), health/ disability and social welfare (19%); and youth/ children’s activities (outside of school) (17%) were the most common.

Around half of ESV volunteers use their professional skills in their volunteering

The volunteering activities outlined in chart 2 do not provide a clear distinction between practical (eg painting, gardening) and skills-based volunteering (eg pro bono, skills sharing); they are likely to cut across some of the listed categories. Other evidence, however, indicates that practical volunteering is most common in ESV but skilled volunteering is also highly prevalent.¹¹

Chart 2: Volunteering activities (% of recent ESV volunteers)



Source: Time Well Spent • Created with Datawrapper

¹¹ CVN, 2018

Further analysis of *Time Well Spent* data shows that over half (55%) of recent ESV volunteers reported using their existing professional or occupational skills in their volunteering, a higher proportion than non-ESV volunteers (50%). The commonly used skills among ESV volunteers were: management skills (42%), communication and marketing skills (32%), and administrative and secretarial skills (32%).

Furthermore, 44% of ESV volunteers reported using other (non-professional or occupational) skills in their volunteering; note respondents could select both options.

ESV volunteers are more likely to undertake activities online compared with non-ESV volunteers

Respondents were asked the extent to which the activities they carried out as part of their volunteering involved being online (examples were provided, such as starting an e-petition, updating a website, responding to emails, etc). ESV volunteers most commonly undertake activities through a mix of online and offline.

However, compared with non-ESV volunteers, they were much more likely to say they carried out activities ‘exclusively online’ (20% ESV vs 4% non-ESV), and in turn, less likely to say they ‘never’ carried out activities online (22% vs 36%). This may reflect greater digital access among employed individuals, more virtual volunteering opportunities being available and taken up through ESV eg digital mentoring, and the younger demographic of

ESV volunteers compared with non-ESV volunteers.

3.4. How is ESV organised?

There is not ‘one’ role responsible for managing and organising ESV

To add further complexity to the multiple groups involved in ESV (volunteer-involving organisations, employers, volunteers, sometimes brokers) those responsible for managing and delivering ESV were not in a set role or team that was consistent across organisations.

Within volunteer-involving organisations, some sat within volunteering teams, while others were in corporate partnership teams. Those responsible for managing ESV in employer organisations also varied, from full-time positions dedicated to ESV to being an add-on to another role. This typically reflected how well established ESV was in the organisation.

ESV volunteering can be disconnected from other volunteering

Some volunteer-involving organisations perceived a disconnect between ESV and other volunteering taking place in the organisations. In some cases, this was reflected not just in the roles and team involved, but also in different systems being used to manage the two. This meant that those volunteering for an organisation could

have different experiences depending on which team they went through.

ESV often struggles to be a priority

A common theme among participants in our qualitative research from across all groups (volunteer-involving organisations, brokers and employers) was that ESV was not perceived as a high priority within their organisations.

Other evidence supports this. For example, the recent CVN survey with volunteer-involving organisations showed that almost half (46%) did not feel that other teams across their organisation were bought in to the value of ESV, especially among middle and lower, than senior management. Additionally, only 11% of those surveyed reported having a strategy for managing their ESV.¹²

‘The problem is that it is never clear where ESV really sits. Whilst it is essentially volunteering, this is often the least well-resourced section of a charity...it takes a motivated staff team manager to recognise the possible value of ESV. A clear organisational ESV strategy would undoubtedly be helpful, but most may not have the resource, time or motivation...to warrant (or get buy-

in for) producing one.’ (Volunteer-involving organisation)

A perceived lack of priority was typically related to, or reflected in organisations in a number of ways. These are outlined below.

In volunteer-involving organisations and employers where ESV was not a priority, common features included:

- No ESV strategy or alignment with a wider organisational strategy
- ESV was not well established or formalised, with little resource attached to it
- ESV did not have a ‘place’ within the organisation’s structure, eg straddling different teams or being an ‘add on’ to another role
- ESV was not embedded in the culture: the benefits and value of ESV were not necessarily fully understood and appreciated by others.

¹² CVN, 2015

4. WHAT ARE THE MAIN MOTIVATIONS FOR GETTING INVOLVED IN ESV?

This section looks at motivations for volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations and employers participating in ESV. It also explores the impact of differing motivations across these groups

4.1. Why do volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations and employers get involved in ESV?

All share a common aim – to make a difference

In our *Time Well Spent* survey, ESV volunteers were asked for the most important reasons why they had first started volunteering. The most common motivation overall was wanting to improve things or help people (36%). This was also the most common motivation for non-ESV volunteers, and reflects wider evidence on why people participate in volunteering generally. Wanting to give time to an organisation or cause of personal importance was also common for ESV volunteers (26% and 25% respectively).

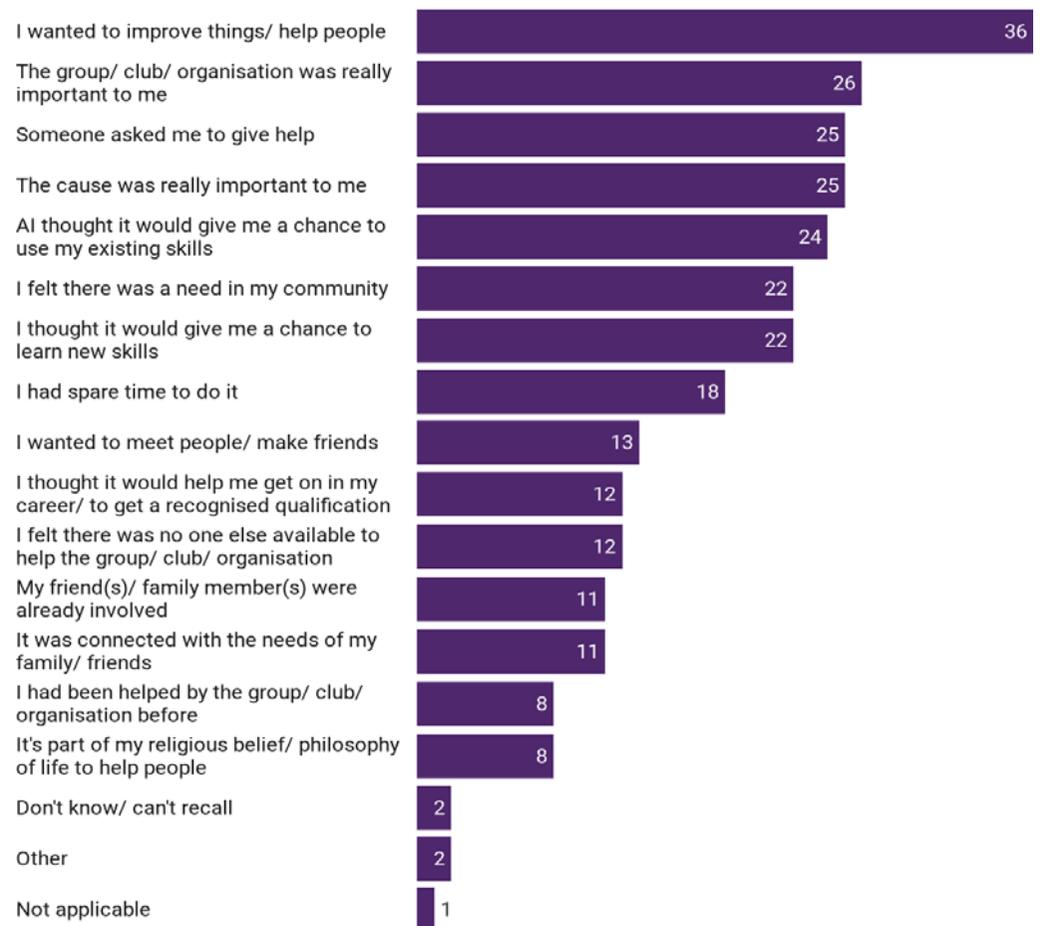
Employers and volunteer-involving organisations participating in ESV were also motivated by making a difference. A desire to make a positive impact on local communities was commonly mentioned by employers who took part in our qualitative research. Volunteer-involving organisations also participated in ESV to support their causes, drawing on the help of much-needed ESV volunteers.

Volunteer-involving organisations, employers and volunteers are also driven by a range of other motivations

While all groups share a common aim in wanting to improve things and help people, they also each have a variety of other motivations for getting involved. This is summarised at the end of this section in diagram 1, with more detail below on each group.

- Volunteers:** As seen in chart 3, while helping others is the most common motivation, there are a range of other reasons ESV volunteers participate. Around one in five volunteers (22%) were motivated by learning new skills, which was higher compared with non-ESV volunteers. This is likely to reflect the younger age profile of ESV volunteers. It is

Chart 3: Motivations for volunteering (% of recent ESV volunteers)



Source: Time Well Spent - Created with Datawrapper

interesting to note, however, that they are just as motivated to use their existing skills as gain new ones (24% vs 22%).

- **Volunteer-involving organisations:** As shown in the top five motivations drawn from recent research¹³ findings (see box below), a primary reason for getting involved in ESV is as a route to financial contributions from the employers involved, whether through direct access to funding or to strengthen relationships with the employer.

Top five motivations for providing ESV opportunities among volunteer-involving organisations:

1. We have a need for volunteers (48%)
2. To strengthen a relationship with a corporate (30%)
3. To access funding (20%)
4. To access skills (16%)
5. To access future partners (16%)

- **Employers:** beyond the impact they want to make on their communities, employers also reported participating in ESV to benefit their employees (eg supporting their development, feeling better about their work place) as well as benefiting their business (eg increased employee productivity, enhanced image and reputation of the business, supporting their organisational strategies, and breaking siloes across teams.)

Many agreed that it was important for employers to demonstrate a good ethos and values as an organisation, and an increasing expectation among those they engaged with, whether clients or employees.

‘Happy and engaged employees work harder, and by supporting volunteering, the business is more profitable...that’s in conjunction with other things. It’s also just the right thing to do, we have a rare privilege of having 80,000 employees with skills who can give back to the local community.’
(Employer)

4.2. What are the impacts of these differing motivations?

Different motivations inevitably shape participation - but can also lead to different priorities

These different motivations outlined in section 4.1 inevitably shape the ways each of these groups participate in ESV. For example, in our qualitative research, we heard examples of volunteer-involving organisations seeking partnerships only with employers who could make financial commitments and employers focusing primarily on programmes that fit with

their organisational priority areas. Volunteers too may, for instance, not be interested in skills-based opportunities if they want to volunteer by doing something different from their everyday activities at work.

The range of motivations driving each group involved in ESV means they may not prioritise the same things. In some cases, this drove negative perceptions of others’ motives for involvement. For example, some volunteer-involving organisations and brokers believed that employers were more motivated by wanting to fulfil their own CSR strategies than a genuine desire to help¹⁴. At the same time, there was also a recognition that volunteer-involving organisations themselves at times provided volunteering opportunities which were not necessarily needed in the hope of obtaining long-term financial contributions. Employers also perceived that some employees saw volunteering as just ‘a day off’.

‘[Requests for large group ESV activities comes from] employers having to tick their CSR boxes and their team building boxes, they don’t want to pay the money for a team building day out, and they see the charitable sector as a cheap

easy way that they can tick...boxes.’
(Broker)

As well as perceptions, differing motivations also at times caused tensions in the relationships between volunteer-involving organisations and employers and the engagement with volunteers. This is explored further in Section 6.4.

A focus on the shared value of making a difference is ESV at its best

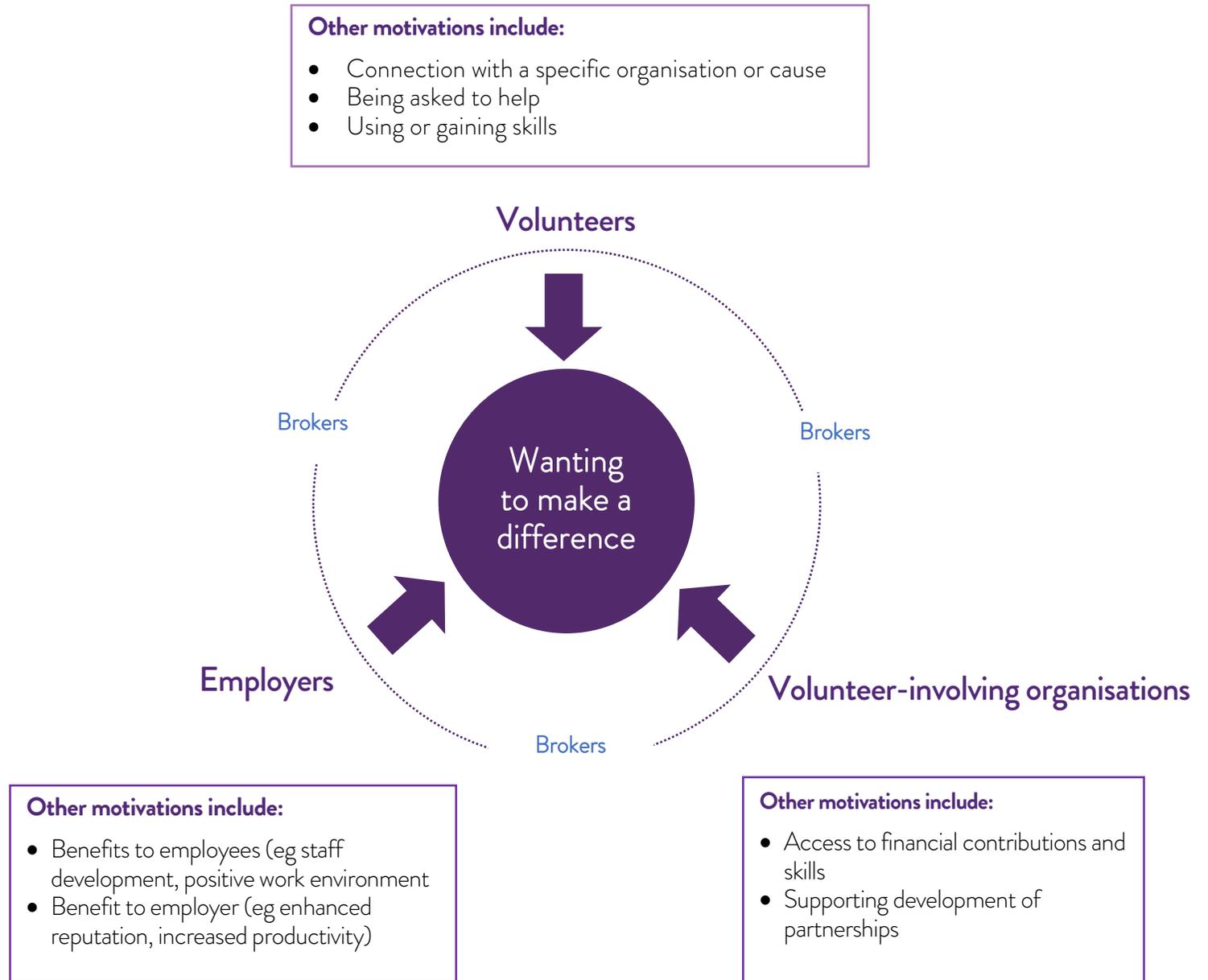
Where ESV was seen to work well, however, was where volunteer-involving organisations and employers were able to balance their own different priorities, find common ground with partners, and deliver opportunities that resonated with the motivations of volunteers. These most often centred around the shared aim of making a difference, as highlighted in earlier this section. In some cases, this was supported by brokers.

This suggests that understanding the motivations of the volunteers and organisations involved (both volunteer-involving organisations and employers) is an important starting point. This theme is explored in more detail in section 8.

¹³ CVN, 2018

¹⁴ CVN, 2018; Three Hands, 2018

Diagram 1: Different motivations for getting involved in ESV



5. HOW DO VOLUNTEERS EXPERIENCE ESV?

This section looks at the experiences of ESV volunteers based on *Time Well Spent*, and reflections on these findings from volunteer-involving organisations, brokers and employers from our qualitative research. This includes overall measures, such as satisfaction and likelihood to recommend their volunteering, and more specifically, perceptions of volunteer management and support. It also explores the perceived benefits volunteers feel they get out of taking part.

5.1. What's the overall experience of ESV volunteers like?

Overall, ESV volunteers are positive about their experience

Overall satisfaction is high, with around 9 in 10 (91%) volunteers who gave time through ESV in the last 12 months reporting they were very

or fairly satisfied with their experience. Over three-quarters (76%) said they either had already or would recommend it to a family or friend, and the same proportion said they were likely to continue volunteering with the group, club or organisation in the next 12 months.

Volunteer-involving organisations, brokers and employers reported positive examples of ESV which resonated with these findings. There were a number of common factors mentioned in these examples – these are outlined below.

In positive examples of ESV, reported by volunteer-involving organisations, brokers and employers:

- Volunteers feel connected with the organisation, prompting an interest to engage further with them
- Volunteers feel that they have made an impact and are valued for it
- Activities are well planned and organised for volunteers
- Volunteers have an enjoyable experience, and talk about it to others afterwards, eg colleagues

‘Those who have volunteered all speak about feeling they have helped others – be it inspiring kids to get into tech or providing extra hands to a charity running a soup kitchen – and they care about that, they know they are doing something other than just helping a company succeed.’ (Employer)

However, ESV volunteers tend to be less positive than non-ESV volunteers

Despite a generally positive perception of their volunteering experience, further analysis highlights that ESV volunteers are, however, less positive than non-ESV volunteers. This is seen in overall satisfaction levels, most notably in the difference for those who report being ‘very satisfied’, with 56% of non-ESV volunteers reporting this compared with 39% of ESV volunteers.

While citing many positive examples, the majority of volunteer-involving organisations, brokers and employers responding to these

findings were not particularly surprised by some of these less positive findings. Most commonly, participants felt that a key reason for lower levels of satisfaction was the fact volunteers may not be actively choosing the organisations they volunteer for themselves, and therefore may feel less engaged.

‘For volunteering, you have to be engaged and invested in what you’re doing...if you’re volunteering outside of work you’ve chosen to do it...and you’re going to get a lot out of it...and you’re being told by your employer ‘today you’re going to help at the homeless shelter’ your point of view isn’t taken into consideration.’ (Broker)

Participants responding to the findings also felt that ESV volunteers’ perceptions experience may be impacted by, or related to volunteers’ expectations. Specifically:

- volunteers applying ‘work’ expectations to their volunteering, for example in relation to

the time taken to organise things, they may not take into account the resources required to manage activities, especially with resource-limited smaller volunteer-involving organisations.

- volunteers having unrealistic expectations of the impact they are able to make within short periods of time, where ESV volunteering takes place in a one-off or short-term context
- volunteers not being prepared for what their volunteering would involve, ie not having their expectations managed in advance.

5.2. Perceptions of volunteer management and support

ESV volunteers are more likely to be critical of the organisation of their volunteering

Perceptions of volunteer management and support reflect the wider findings on overall satisfaction. Across different statements relating to specific aspects of their volunteer experience, ESV were more likely than not to be positive about their experience, whether it be finding the process of getting involved easy (85%), there being a culture of respect and trust in the organisation (80%) and feeling supported (75%).

However, they were less likely to be positive compared with non-ESV volunteers. This can be seen in table 1, which looks at a number of different aspects of their volunteering from

the speed of the process of getting involved to the amount of bureaucracy and attitudes to risk.

Notably, just over half (51%) of ESV volunteers felt things could be much better organised – but there is a tension with people also feeling things were too bureaucratic (42%) and too structured or formalised (34%). Furthermore, a significant proportion – 41% of ESV volunteers – agreed that their volunteering feels like it’s ‘becoming too much like paid work’, much higher than the 16% of non-ESV volunteers who agreed with this statement.

While these tensions around the formalisation of volunteering are not unique to ESV, the higher proportions of ESV volunteers agreeing with these statements indicates that this poses a particular issue in this context. Some of these issues are likely to relate to the more formalised setting of ESV volunteering and employer involvement. It may also reflect the volunteer experience not being a key priority. This is covered in further detail in section 6.3 which explores the barriers to providing a quality volunteer experience.

ESV volunteers are more likely to feel recognition is important, but less likely to feel recognised enough

These less positive perceptions may also reflect feelings of not being valued enough for their time, which around one in five ESV volunteers reported (21% of ESV disagreed with the statement ‘I feel recognised enough for the unpaid help I give’). Non-ESV

Table 1: Statements about organising and managing of volunteering	ESV (% agree)	Non-ESV (% agree)
I expected the process of getting involved in the group / club / organisation to be quicker	36%	12%
Things could be much better organised	51%	33%
There’s too much bureaucracy (i.e. too many administrative processes)	42%	22%
Things are too structured / formalised	34%	11%
The organisation is too concerned about risk	41%	13%

volunteers again were more positive with only 10% disagreeing with the statement.

This may be even more of an issue when considering that ESV volunteers were more likely to value recognition: over half (55%) of ESV volunteers agreed that recognition was important to them, this was higher than non-ESV volunteers (37%). This indicates that for some ESV volunteers, their experience is not meeting their expectations when it comes to feeling valued for the support they give.

5.3. Perceived benefits of volunteering

ESV volunteers perceive a range of benefits from their volunteering

Despite some of these less positive perceptions of their volunteer experience, the majority of ESV volunteers perceive a range of benefits from participating, as shown in chart 4.

The common benefit they perceived, which aligns with volunteers’ key reason for getting involved in the first place, was feeling that they made a difference (84%). This was followed by it giving them a sense of personal achievement, and enjoyment and it broadening their life experience (all 83%).

As shown, the benefits they perceived were varied – including practical benefits such as gaining new skills and experience (76%), social benefits in meeting new people (82%), and personal benefits, in improved mental health and wellbeing (71%).

ESV volunteers were less likely to feel they gain from volunteering than non-ESV volunteers, but cite similar benefits overall

Chart 4 also shows how perceived benefits of volunteers compare between ESV and non-ESV volunteers. This highlights two key points:

Firstly, across a number of different impacts, a lower proportion of ESV volunteers perceived a benefit compared with non-ESV volunteers – this is likely to reflect the less positive perceptions overall highlighted in this section so far, as well as the fact that ESV volunteers may not be volunteering as frequently as non-ESV volunteers. The overall *Time Well Spent* research findings highlight that frequent volunteers were more likely to perceive positive impacts.

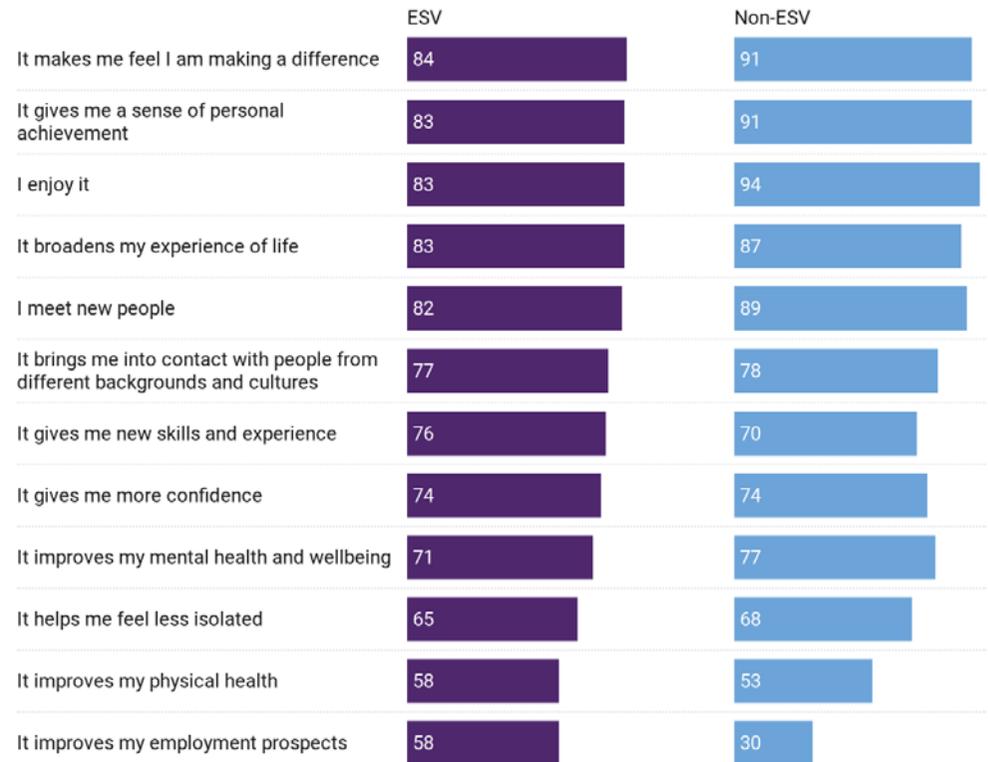
One of the most notable differences between the two groups was that 83% of ESV volunteers agreed that they enjoyed it, compared with 94% of non-ESV volunteers. The only notable benefits where ESV volunteers were much more likely to agree related to acquiring new skills and improved employment prospects. ESV volunteers were almost twice as likely to agree that it had improved their employment prospects (58% ESV vs 30% non-ESV). This, however, is likely to reflect the fact that ESV volunteers are more likely to be of a working age and status, and of a younger age profile (who we know from *Time Well Spent* are more likely to cite these benefits).

Secondly, while there are some differences in the proportions of ESV and non-ESV volunteers agreeing with these statements,

the ranking of the perceived benefits was broadly similar. For example, the feeling of making a difference is among the highest benefits for both, and even though ESV volunteers were much more likely to say it improved their employment prospects, it is still ranked lowest among both groups.

This suggests that, as with motivations, while volunteering in a different context, the key benefits ESV volunteers feel they gain from their volunteering are very similar to non-ESV volunteers.

Chart 4: Perceived benefits gained from volunteering - recent ESV and non-ESV volunteers (% agree)



Source: Time Well Spent - Created with Datawrapper

6. WHAT ARE THE KEY CHALLENGES FACING ESV?

This section explores a number of themes section explores some key challenges facing ESV, centred around a number of themes. It starts by acknowledging the many positive experiences of ESV, but also raises the question of why these challenges still remain (many are not new). In light of some of the findings from recent research, including new insights about the volunteer experience, we focus on the barriers to ESV moving forward.

6.1. Setting the context

Many volunteer-organisations, brokers and employers benefit from participating in ESV

As detailed in section 5, while less positive compared with non-ESV volunteers, the majority of ESV volunteers report having a positive experience. Our research suggests that the experience of volunteer-involving organisations, brokers and employers largely reflect that of volunteers.

Recent research with volunteer-involving organisations reported that for most, the experience is positive; around one in five respondents cited negative experiences¹⁵. Positive examples cited by volunteer-involving organisations who took part in our qualitative research supported this, for example where ESV had enabled them to do things which they otherwise would not have achieved themselves.

‘We have been able to carry out and complete a huge range of projects that we would otherwise have taken our small garden team many days/weeks to complete. It is a very positive part of the work we do and allows us to develop higher standards in the garden.’
(Volunteer-involving organisation)

Employers also shared examples of successful ESV, including benefits that matched what they sought from ESV in the first place. This included feeling more connected to their local community, and better employee engagement. One university reported that 87% of their employee volunteers had agreed that their pride in the university had increased as a result of their volunteering.

We also heard about the impacts of specific programmes or schemes. An example of this was the impact of the [Employer-Supported Policing](#) scheme (see more in Section 8.5). Research had been recently undertaken, showing that the benefits of the scheme to businesses ranged from increased confidence of employees to skills being brought back into the business.¹⁶

Brokers provided examples of how they had successfully supported volunteer-involving organisations and employers in achieving these benefits. CVN research supports these findings, showing that brokers helped to increase the number of ESV volunteers and better identify volunteers that align to the needs of a volunteer-involving organisation¹⁷.

Challenges remain – and many of these are not new

While there are many examples of where ESV works well, our engagement with volunteer-involving organisations, employers and brokers engaged in ESV highlights that there are also many challenges. Whether in the form of relationships which have not worked well, day-to-day frustrations or past experiences which have led to less positive perceptions towards ESV as a whole, these negative experiences of ESV had, in some cases, a significant impact on those involved.

What is notable about the issues raised is that for the most part, they are not ‘new’ issues. This suggests that there may be significant or entrenched barriers holding ESV back. In the rest of this section, we explore some of the key challenges relating to a number of themes central to ESV, in turn:

- Volunteer engagement and uptake (6.2)
- Providing a quality ESV volunteer experience (6.3)
- Relationships between those involved in managing and organising ESV (6.4)

¹⁵ CVN, 2018

¹⁶ Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice, (2019), Employer Supported Policing: Impact Report

¹⁷ CVN, 2018

- ESV Volunteering opportunities (6.5)
- Getting smaller organisations involved in ESV (6.6)

For each, we focus primarily on barriers to ESV moving forward. Section 7 and 8 then looks ahead to the future, and how these challenges might be overcome in practice.

6.2. Volunteer engagement and uptake

Key challenge: current uptake and future interest in ESV are low

As outlined in section 3.1, ESV currently makes up a small proportion of volunteer participation overall, despite some small increases in participation levels over time.

Our *Time Well Spent* research indicates this may continue to be the case: only 10% of all survey respondents (including both volunteers and non-volunteers), when presented with a number of ways of getting involved in volunteering in the next 12 months, were interested in future opportunities to volunteer that were ‘supported or encouraged by their employer’. This was slightly higher (16%), for those who were working (either full time or part time, at the time of the survey), which is more likely to reflect a relevant audience. Nonetheless, it is an area of interest only among a minority.

What are the barriers to progress?

Our research suggests there may be a number of factors contributing to low levels of uptake and interest:

Awareness and availability of opportunities may be a barrier in the first instance

Engagement in ESV relies first and foremost on employers providing opportunities for employees to get involved, and employees being aware of these opportunities.

In our *Time Well Spent* research, among those working for an employer at the time of the survey (across all respondents, not just volunteers), half (51%) said their employer did not provide ESV opportunities¹⁸. As seen earlier, those who do provide opportunities are more likely to be working in larger organisations.

More strikingly, however, in addition to those who said their employer did not provide opportunities, a further quarter said they ‘don’t know’ whether they did or not. Furthermore, awareness among respondents whose employers did not provide ESV and those who were not employed at the time of the survey was fairly low, with 60% saying they were not aware that these opportunities existed. This indicates that more could be done to raise

awareness of ESV both within organisations and more widely.

Of those who have participated in ESV recently, one in three do not feel encouraged by their employer

The findings also highlight that more could be done not just to raise awareness but also actively encourage employees to participate. Around a third (34%) of those who had volunteered during work hours or participated in volunteering activities organised by their employer in the last 12 months, said their employer encouraged them in their volunteering ‘not very much’ or ‘not at all’.

Employers who took part in our qualitative research reported a number of ways in which they encouraged employees to get involved in ESV, including through communication and by providing a diverse range of opportunities. However, they also raise some practical barriers to communicating with employees, eg reaching those in non-office-based roles, which may explain in part the perceived lack of encouragement among some employees.

Competing work pressures pose a key barrier to engagement

From the employer perspective, the most frequently mentioned barrier to engaging employees was competing work pressures. This determined when in the year it was easier

or more challenging to engage employees as well as who was more and less likely to get involved.

‘The challenge is as the business gets busier, it gets more challenging to release employees from the front line, in our contact centres. Everybody knows about it...but they’re too busy.’ (Employer)

Furthermore, barriers went beyond the practical issue of being too busy to participate. In some organisations, especially those where ESV was not embedded in the organisation’s culture, employees may feel the need to justify or legitimise the time they take out of the working day. For some, this meant only participating if they were volunteering along with others eg as a team.

Some don’t see ESV as being ‘for them’

Employers recognised that for some employees, volunteering was something that simply was not of interest to them. However, there were also those who they felt ‘opted themselves out’ of participation, feeling that it was something that others could participate in but that they could not.

¹⁸ Respondents were asked if their employer actively encouraged or had schemes for employees to take part in community projects, or to help voluntary or charity

organisations, giving them time during their working hours to participate in these types of activities

This was especially the case for skills-based volunteering opportunities. For example, a law firm reported a contrast in engagement between those in their legal roles, many of whom participated in pro-bono volunteering, and those in their support functions who were less likely to see volunteering as relevant for them. This 'divide' was intensified further by these employees being based in different offices.

The imbalance in skills-based volunteering participation is also highlighted in *Time Well Spent* research: those using professional and occupational skills (not just in ESV) were more likely to be from higher socio-economic groups.

'The thing that is difficult...is it's hard to get lawyers away from their desk with clients demanding that they should be doing something. And people do self-select, some business service staff think this opportunity isn't for me, it's for lawyers, I don't have the right skills.' (Employer)

6.3. Providing a quality ESV experience

Key challenge: ESV volunteers are less positive about their experience than non-ESV volunteers

We have explored the volunteer experience in detail in section 5, which highlights that while most have a good experience, ESV volunteers are typically less positive compared with non-ESV volunteers. This presents a 'new' challenge for those involved in ESV, as previous research has not typically focused on the experience of volunteers within the ESV context.

In section 5, we include volunteer-involving organisations, employers and brokers' reflections which may partly help to explain these lower levels of satisfaction – primarily centred on volunteer expectations. Here, we look to go further and understand what other contributing factors might be at play.

What are the barriers to progress?

Our research suggests there may be a number of factors driving lower levels of satisfaction:

Organisations may not be prioritising volunteers and their experience

Our *Time Well Spent* report highlights the importance and benefit to volunteer-involving organisations gained from providing a positive

volunteer experience. In the context of ESV, however, our research indicates that the volunteer experience is not always a priority for those managing ESV.

This is likely to relate to the different motivations at play, highlighted in section 4. For example, we have seen that a key motivation for volunteer-involving organisations for getting involved in ESV was to build relationships with employers and secure financial contributions. The findings suggest that the focus on investing in these relationships may be taking volunteer-involving organisations away from building longer term, meaningful connections with volunteers themselves. Just one in five (22%) volunteer-involving organisations doing ESV reported taking the opportunity to cross-sell other volunteering roles, which may reflect ESV volunteers being seen as a shorter rather than longer term asset (CVN, 2018).

Employers, too, appreciated there was a balance to strike between their own organisational priorities and engaging with employee motivations. Where opportunities were driven above all by organisational needs, there was inevitably less focus on the volunteer and their experience (and also on meeting volunteer-involving organisations' needs.) Some volunteer-involving organisations and brokers reported examples of opportunities, which met an employer need, eg to help teams get together through a teambuilding day, but the activity was not needed by the volunteer-involving organisation. Consequently, the volunteers

had a less positive experience as they did not feel they were making an impact.

On both sides, a lack of focus on the volunteer experience is reflected in the few organisations systematically capturing feedback from volunteers. It was recognised across all groups involved that more could be done to listen to and learn about volunteers' experiences, both to improve opportunities and showcase successful ESV.

'We would like to do a much better job...of engaging volunteers as long term supporters beyond the framework of corporate volunteering ... we do file feedback provided via email from volunteers after the day but not via a survey or another reliable measurable method.' (Volunteer-involving organisation)

The restrictive nature of some ESV arrangements may also limit the benefits volunteers gain

As mentioned in section 3, the nature of ESV participation is often driven by the extent to which employers are involved and prescribe the type of volunteering. Among recent ESV volunteers in our *Time Well Spent* research, over a quarter (27%) disagreed that they had flexibility around the time they gave, indicating there is room for improvement in this area.

This is likely to reflect some of the less flexible ESV arrangements described earlier.

Furthermore, as ESV volunteers are more likely to be involved on a more infrequent, time-limited basis than non-ESV volunteers (see section 3.3) it may be more difficult for them to reap the full benefits of volunteering. Our *Time Well Spent* research showed that frequent volunteers are more likely to perceive benefits from volunteering than those who give time less often.

‘It is more difficult to find really meaningful volunteering when ESV can sometimes be very limited in terms of free time and sometimes just a one-off availability. One or two days a year doesn't allow for a meaningful role to be created for these volunteers.’ (Volunteer-involving organisation)

The boundaries between work and volunteering are more complicated in ESV

Lower levels of satisfaction among ESV volunteers have been linked in part to ‘work’ expectations being applied to their volunteering (see section 5.3). This highlights a tension for ESV, in overlapping boundaries between ‘work’ and ‘not work’.

While those who manage or organise ESV recognise that volunteers often want it to feel different to work, it takes place during work hours and often involves volunteers using their professional skills. Overall, the more formalised setting in which ESV takes place is likely to contribute to the high proportion of those feeling like it’s ‘becoming too much like paid work’ compared with non-ESV volunteers.

This tension plays out also in relation to the reward and recognition of ESV volunteers. While many do not feel recognised enough, there is the question of what is an appropriate, balanced way to achieve this. Some believe that formal mechanisms would encourage employees to engage with volunteering (eg including them in appraisals), but others felt that this would compromise the essence of ESV being a voluntary activity.

¹⁹ CIPD, 2015

²⁰ CIPD, 2015

6.4. Relationships between those involved in managing ESV

Key challenge: a mismatch of needs and expectations can create barriers to effective ESV relationships

Previous research has highlighted there is often a mismatch between the needs and expectations of volunteer-involving organisations and employers managing and delivering ESV. The CIPD report²⁰ which focused on this relationship drew out a number of key challenges, as shown in Table 2. It highlights the costs involved as a particular area of tension, describing it as ‘one of the single most significant inhibitors to ESV’.

Our research, drawing on qualitative research conducted for this report and more recent evidence, shows that this area remains a challenge. The CVN survey looking from the perspective of volunteer-involving organisations highlights that while most volunteer-involving organisations generate opportunities based on organisational need, around half (52%) of those surveyed agreed they create opportunities based on what their partners would like to do²¹. Sometimes this led to activities being delivered, even when not particularly needed.

Table 2: Potential tensions between employers and volunteer-involving organisations - CIPD¹⁹

Employers	Volunteer-involving organisations
Wanting to place 20-30 people in one go	Wanting smaller groups or individuals
Not being prepared to pay direct costs	Being unable to continue unless full costs covered
Wanting a one-off activity	Wanting a longer-term commitment
Wanting to do non-specialised activities	Wanting to utilise specialised skills of company employees
Primary aim – team building	Primary aim – benefiting the organisation
Publicity shy	Keen to publicise partnership

²¹ CVN, 2018

Similar issues were raised by volunteer-involving organisations and employers in our qualitative research, although some reported being part of or supporting successful ESV partnerships. These tended to be longer term relationships, where mutually beneficial aims had been developed over some time, sometimes supported by brokers.

What are the barriers to progress?

Our research suggests there may be a number of factors driving mismatched needs and expectations between employers and volunteer-involving organisations:

Relationships are impacted by individual needs and priorities, which can pull organisations in different directions

In section 5, we have outlined the fact that those involved in ESV, while sharing a common aim, also have different individual motivations driving them which can influence their priorities. The findings from this research highlight that differences in the ways volunteer-involving organisations and employers manage these ‘other’ priorities are what often drive relational issues between them.

For example, volunteer-involving organisations were most likely to look for long-term partnerships with employers, as a more secure route to financial contributions. For employers, however, wanting to meet the range of employees’ needs and preferences often meant that a variety of partnerships was

preferred, over a small number of long-term relationships.

Additionally, when it came to opportunities, volunteer-involving organisations looked to minimise the resource required to manage and organise ESV activities, given their limited capacity. Therefore, skills-based opportunities were preferred over practical large group-based activities, as they took less time to organise (they were also perceived to be more impactful). On the other hand, employers also had limited resource, but for them it was skills-based initiatives which took more time to organise, as they required more input (eg in identifying suitable opportunities). These skills-based opportunities also typically had fewer individuals involved, which was also less likely to help them meet targets, where they was based on numbers of volunteers.

These challenges highlight that issues relating to external relationships are closely related to what goes internally within organisations and that both need to be considered together.

A number of different factors may be contributing to employers not paying for ESV

A common issue perceived by volunteer-involving organisations and brokers was that employers were not prepared to pay for ESV. While some sensed an improvement in employers’ understanding around the issues of costs over time, many continued to see this as a challenge and one which would only become more so in the future. See section 7).

It is clear that in some cases, employer perceptions that ‘volunteering should be free’ may be the reason that they are not willing to pay for ESV. However, our findings – which draws on both new research, especially from the employer perspective, and other evidence – highlights that there may be a number of contributing factors to the cost ‘issue’ (see box below).

It suggests volunteer-involving organisations and brokers also have a part to play in helping to address this.

Employers may not pay for ESV because:

- **it’s not well-understood what it takes to resource and manage ESV:** a wider lack of appreciation of the resource required to manage ESV (especially where experience of the voluntary sector is limited)
- **it’s not always clear what the cost is for:** a lack of clear information about why there is a cost – and what it is for.
- **it’s not always consistent:** it may be hard for employers to understand cost, with there being variation in practice around charging for ESV. A recent survey (Three Hands, 2018) found that 1 in 5 of the volunteer-involving organisations surveyed charged a fee to cover the cost of hosting employee volunteers. Our qualitative research highlights that some have different models for charging by activity eg charging for practical but not skills-based opportunities. Brokers also reported varied practices, with some charging and others not.
- **it’s not always talked about:** conversations and negotiations around cost were perceived by volunteer-involving organisations to be difficult in part because they are fearful of losing donations and jeopardising relationships. While it seems that some volunteer-involving organisations are becoming more confident in these conversations, it is likely to be the case that there may be missed opportunities for volunteering-involving organisations to educate employers about the resources required for managing ESV, and reasons why it is sometimes necessary.
- **it’s not always in their control:** some employers simply did not have budget available for ESV (especially if they were smaller), or there were barriers to accessing the budget required. Where ESV was not a priority, this was more likely to be the case.

Some ‘translation’ is needed to bridge the gap between volunteer-involving organisations and employers

While the issue of cost is clearly an area of particular tension between volunteer-involving organisations and employers, brokers in particular were keen to highlight that it reflected wider issues of a lack of mutual understanding between those involved.

This impacted on the development of quality opportunities, as it was not always clear to employers what volunteer-involving organisations’ needs were, and in turn employers themselves found it difficult to translate their offer into something that was appropriate in the context of the volunteer-involving organisations they were working with.

All groups acknowledged, however, that this ‘translation’ process did not just happen on its own. It required time and resources on the part of both organisations to look at individually but also to work on together. However, with limited resources (especially for smaller volunteer-involving organisations and SMEs) this was not always possible. Some drew on broker support for this.

‘It’s a lack of understanding on both sides and a lack of language...there needs to be more education on both sides about what each other are for and how they can enrich each other but there’s not enough knowledge out there yet.’ (Broker)

6.5. ESV volunteering opportunities

Key challenge: volunteering opportunities of most benefit to volunteer-involving organisations are not those most popular among employers

Previous research has highlighted that ESV opportunities often take the form of one-off, practical group-based activities which may have limited value to volunteer-involving organisations and takes more resource to manage. Longer-term and skills-based volunteering are perceived to be of more benefit, but seem to be harder to deliver in practice.

Volunteer-involving organisations and brokers taking part in the qualitative research conducted for this report, perceived some employers moving away from the traditional ‘paint and fix’ opportunities towards more skills-based opportunities. However, there was still a sense that much of ESV still centred on requests for resource-heavy, low-impact volunteering, especially among employers new to ESV.

What are the barriers to progress?

Our research suggests there may be a number of factors driving the existence of less impactful volunteering opportunities:

Volunteering is often equated with team-building

A key issue raised by all groups was the conflation of team-building activities and volunteering, which typically led to requests for large group-based activities, with little flexibility (eg for a specific day) and often not of great value volunteer-involving organisations.

These were not just reported by brokers and volunteer-involving organisations, but an issue contended with by those managing ESV within employer organisations, who reported the pressures of managing and delivering these types of internal requests. This raises the question of both motivation (is team-building or volunteering the primary motivation?), as well as how volunteering is understood within organisations.

‘Lots of organisations conflate ESV with team building...it’s often not very useful for organisations and can sometimes even cost more than the help brought in. Often this is seen as a free ‘away day.’ (Broker)

Not all employees want to or feel they have work-based skills to offer

In our *Time Well Spent* survey, recent ESV volunteers were asked whether they preferred to use skills that were the same or different to those used in their day-to-day activities (eg work, study). The responses were almost

equally balanced (42% same vs 40% different). This finding resonated with volunteer-involving organisations, brokers and employers who reported that while often volunteers were happy to offer their professional or occupational skills eg via pro-bono initiatives, a key barrier to skills-based volunteering was that many wanted to do something completely different from their work.

‘There’s also a tension between what charities say - we want the volunteers to use the skills that they use at work (e.g. law, finance, sitting on committees etc) and what the volunteers often want (a break from having to do law, finance, sitting on committees, etc)!’ (Employer)

Furthermore, we have seen some employees are perceived to be ‘opting themselves out’ of certain types of volunteering, thinking they might not have any skills to offer. This suggests that barriers to skills-based volunteering are not just related to employers themselves but also to employees, whether these relate to their motivations or perceptions of volunteering.

Measures of success focus primarily on numbers of volunteers, not impact

While both employers and volunteer-involving organisations sought opportunities that made a positive impact, for some, a key barrier was

that their measures of success did not necessarily reflect this aim. The CVN survey²², which asked a range of volunteer-involving organisations whether they measure and report on the impacts of ESV, found that only around 4 in 10 (38%) did. The remaining majority either said that they did not (40%) or only did sometimes (22%). There were no differences cited by size of organisation.

Our qualitative research also found that where ESV sat within corporate fundraising teams especially, financial measures were the key focus, making it more difficult for other types of impact to be recognised. In both cases, these issues reflect the tensions between differing motivations driving ESV internally within their organisations, as highlighted earlier (section 4.2).

Employers cited similar challenges internally in relation to the key 'measures of success' for ESV within their organisations. Again, this related to motivation: a common theme was that measures were driven by senior leaders. Where the motivation was a 'big success statistic', the focus inevitably remained on numbers of volunteers. There was also a recognition, however, that a focus on numbers could impact on the quality of ESV, and even risked driving the wrong behaviours or activities.

'It all comes back to how you measure and your goals, it results in some pretty bad behaviours... We have a goal of 66% people volunteering which we're getting rid of...but taking a selfie with a sticker on Facebook counts as volunteering. We had 40% of people volunteering but only 19% I would be happy to say it was good volunteering.' (Employer)

Across all groups involved in managing and organising ESV, there was a desire to look at how there could be more effective measures in place for ESV, with an increased focus on quality, not just quantity. However, this was not seen as an easy task. The questions raised such as 'how do you prove impact with data' and 'what are effective measures' reflected a lack of confidence in this area, and many felt that further guidance and support would be needed if they were to make progress.

6.6. Getting smaller organisations involved

Key challenge: levels of participation are lower in smaller organisations

Previous research has highlighted that while SMEs and smaller volunteer-involving organisations could benefit from being

involved in ESV, it is an area dominated by larger organisations on both sides. As outlined earlier in this report (see section 3.2) this imbalance in who is involved in ESV remains.

While the data can not say whether there has been any changes over time in the participation by size of organisation, the consensus among brokers in particular was that engaging smaller organisations remains a challenge.

The need to address this issue may be relevant now more than ever. Recent research shows that it is the small volunteer-involving organisations that have the most need for ESV volunteers²³. Furthermore, if more employers look to get involved in ESV, as some evidence suggests may be the case, the need to accommodate SMEs, as well as larger employers may become more pressing.

What are the barriers to progress?

Practical barriers continue to stall smaller organisations getting involved

Our research echoes previous evidence showing that while there is a willingness to include smaller organisations in ESV (both smaller volunteer-involving organisations and SMEs), limited resources - both staff and financial - makes it hard for them to participate. Those within smaller volunteer-involving organisations and SMEs leading on

ESV were typically doing it as an add-on to a full-time role, and there was more reliance on personal connections to find and manage ESV relationships and opportunities. It suggests that without support, it may be challenging for smaller organisations (whether it be employers or volunteer-involving organisations) to get involved in ESV.

'We primarily work with big companies though some SMEs participate in corporate volunteering at our regional centres. We could do a much better job of attracting these SMEs, but the price is, no doubt, putting off higher levels of engagement.' (Volunteer-involving organisation)

The focus on larger organisations means that the ESV offer is not always a suitable fit

Some of the feedback from those involved in ESV suggests that the current model of ESV does not fit with what SMEs and smaller volunteer-involving organisations can take on or offer. For example, as highlighted in this report, employer requests often involve large groups of employees volunteering. While volunteer-involving organisations of all sizes reported challenges with accommodating large numbers of volunteers, small volunteer-

²² CVN, 2018

²³ CVN, 2018

involving organisations are least likely to be able to take them on.

We have also seen that a key motivation for volunteer-involving organisations is to develop partnerships with employers, as a means to financial contributions. As a result, SMEs may be perceived as being of less 'value' to volunteer-involving organisations and miss out on opportunities. Furthermore, ESV 'packages' created by volunteer-involving organisations may not be suitable for SMEs.

'When contacting charities, they tend to see it as a chance to try and sell us a package. As a scale-up we don't have the funds to pay for this.'
(Employer)

7. WHAT MIGHT THE NEXT FIVE YEARS LOOK LIKE FOR ESV?

Employers, volunteer-involving organisations and brokers participating in the research were asked to consider what the next years ahead might look like for ESV, and the external drivers which might impact on its development. A number of themes emerged.

Research participants expected ESV to increase in the next years

As outlined in section 3.1, many volunteer-involving organisations and brokers had already perceived an increased interest in ESV among employers in recent years, and many felt this trend was likely to continue.

Other research suggests that this interest in ESV is shared by volunteer-involving organisations too. Among the volunteer-involving organisations surveyed by CVN, among those who did not currently participate in ESV, the majority said that they had a desire to do so in the future²⁴.

The financial climate is likely to get tougher

A key concern among all groups, however, related to the economic climate in which ESV operates, and how to address the challenges of meeting a growing demand for ESV in an uncertain economic environment.

For employers, there was a recognition that the uncertainties on the economy and jobs linked to Brexit could have an impact on less-obviously profitable parts of their business, like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. As a consequence, increasing or maintaining ESV budgets during challenging economic times was likely to become tougher. Some felt that the need to show value for money would become greater as well as needing to better evidence the impact of volunteering.

‘The ever more pressure on budgets for businesses require that the business case for ESV needs to probably become greater and the extent to which impact could play a

part in this could be influential.’
(Employer)

Meanwhile, volunteer-involving organisations and brokers shared concerns around funding in a challenging environment, and felt there would be under more pressure to charge for ESV, if they were not already doing so.

‘I think introducing charges for ESV is a real challenge and is not ideal ... but is becoming more and more necessary for so many organisations as financial sustainability is a real issue; so many small charities are closing and valued public services are being reduced or lost.’ (Broker)

Concerns around funding were all the more pressing with increased demands for services being placed on volunteer-involving organisations, especially in health and social

care. As shown in section 3.1, research²⁵ indicates that the need for ESV volunteers is already increasing.

Higher expectations placed on employers are likely to drive ESV forward

While the climate in which ESV operates is likely to get tougher, some perceived that increased expectations on employers to place more emphasis on employee wellbeing and to have a values-based culture and ethos, were likely to give impetus to ESV.

‘[Volunteering] promotes a better work-life balance...given the increasing evidence of the positive impact of volunteering ... on health and wellbeing. Increasingly, the offer of elements like ESV as part of the overall employment package is attractive to prospective job applicants.’ (Employer)

²⁴ CVN, 2018

²⁵ Three Hands, 2018

Even though there were some doubts raised over some employers' motivations currently, participants across all groups felt that with these changes, they could see (or hoped to see) corporate social responsibility arrangements going beyond a 'tick box exercise' and making a genuine impact in society, both through volunteer-involving organisations they support and through the workplace.

'If volunteering can be built in effectively to organisations there is potential for better work-life balance, a broader experience base and greater, genuine CSR.'
(Employer)

ESV may evolve in new and innovative ways

These increased expectations on employers may mean having an ESV offer may become the standard, not what differentiates from other employers²⁶. There are already some signs that organisations are looking to creative and more innovative ways of incentivising employees through ESV. For example, in the US, Starbucks are running a six-month pilot programme where 36 employees in 13 US cities will continue to get full pay while working at selected non-profit organisations for half the work week, in work that aligns with Starbucks' social impact priorities²⁷.

Additionally, it is likely that wider changes in the work environment such as increasingly flexible and remote working may trigger changes in the way ESV is delivered. These are likely to come hand in hand with digitally supported or digitally based opportunities. For some, these changes prompted uncertainty or even concerns. However, others saw this as an opportunity for ESV to develop in new ways.

These changes, whether driven by employers or wider societal shifts, may raise the question of where ESV is best placed to meet needs and where it is not. Where volunteer-involving organisations choose to support and deliver ESV, the need to engage with these changes is likely to increase.

'Overall there needs to be more movement of charities towards a flexible approach to volunteers - offering more short-term opportunities as well as the ongoing roles.'
(Broker)

²⁶ Accenture (2016), A 2020 Vision for Employer-Supported Volunteering

²⁷ Jackson R (2019) - blog 'Are we ready for the future of Employer Supported Volunteering?'

8. HOW MIGHT WE PREPARE ESV FOR THE FUTURE?

This section looks ahead, taking into account the challenges faced by ESV (section 6) and the external drivers likely to impact on its development in the years to come (section 7). It also considers five key questions to help organisations prepare for the future of ESV, drawing on current practices and stakeholders' views on what would help move ESV forward. It also includes case examples to illustrate findings.

- How might we better engage volunteers in ESV? (8.1)
- How might we make ESV more inclusive? (8.2)
- How might we create a more positive culture around ESV in organisations? (8.3)
- How might organisations involved in ESV work better together? (8.4)
- How might we make ESV more impactful? (8.5)

8.1. How might we better engage volunteers in ESV?

One of the key challenges outlined in this report is that ESV makes up a small part of volunteering participation overall and future interest in ESV overall among potential volunteers is low. It also highlights the less positive experiences reported among ESV compared with non-ESV volunteers.

The barriers highlighted in section 6.2 indicate that availability of opportunities (and awareness of them) is a first step that needs to be considered. However, the findings suggest a number of other factors which could help organisations engage ESV volunteers more effectively. These draw on the eight features of a quality experience outlined in the conclusions of our main *Time Well Spent* report which all apply to ESV volunteers. Here we highlight the features that are most relevant in the context of ESV.

Ease and flexibility in getting involved

Our recent *Time Well Spent* report highlighted that among those who had not volunteered recently (not just in ESV, but generally) and those who had never volunteered, flexibility was the factor most likely to encourage them

to get involved. Our focused research on ESV indicates that in this context, flexibility is even more likely to be important given work commitments are a key barrier to participation in ESV.

Employers, volunteer-involving organisations and brokers in our qualitative research suggested that increased flexibility in ESV could be achieved through a combination of volunteering opportunities which better fit around employees' work (eg volunteering that could be done from or nearby the office, or remotely) and employers themselves being more flexible in the way they allow their employees to participate (eg allowing and encouraging employees to do their volunteering in smaller chunks of time).

It is likely that as flexible working arrangements become more common, the need for organisations to adapt ESV in these ways may also increase. Some volunteer-involving organisations in our qualitative research reported already taking steps to do this, eg looking into digital-based volunteering opportunities. Making ESV more flexible is likely not just to remove practical barriers to participation for potential volunteers, but also provide a better experience for those already participating, reducing the feeling of their

volunteering being formalised, bureaucratic and work-like.

'It would be good to see more digital solutions, so ESVs can give their time in a way that can fit more easily within their working day. We are starting to trial virtual volunteer sessions between volunteers and clients, via video calls, which can enable an ESV to use their hours to mentor or coach. It would be good to see companies move to a more flexible model in terms of volunteer hours.' (Volunteer-involving organisation)

Making ESV more of a 'personal' experience

The findings suggest that where volunteers are genuinely engaged with ESV, it feels personal to them and is on their own terms. These kind of tailored volunteering opportunities may become more and more an expectation among employees, with increasing demand for personalised experiences in the consumer

world driven partly by advances in technology²⁸. It suggests that employers need to consider different ways of delivering more ‘personalised’ volunteering experiences, digitally supported where relevant.

The findings suggest that all organisations can help ESV volunteers have more ownership of their volunteer experiences by ensuring that:

- **volunteers feel that they have freely chosen to participate.** *Time Well Spent* has highlighted that volunteering that is (and feels) truly voluntary is one of the basic cornerstones of a quality volunteer experience.
- **volunteers are involved in shaping opportunities:** examples of ways employers were already doing this included asking employees to vote for the organisations they want to volunteer for (similar to token schemes in supermarkets) or having a volunteering committee made up of colleagues from different teams to contribute ideas, act as a sounding board and share information. We also heard of brokers and volunteer-involving organisations getting employee input when developing volunteering opportunities.
- **volunteers feel prepared for what they are getting involved in:** some examples of less successful ESV were where volunteers’ expectations had not been managed, leading to negative experiences. Preparing volunteers was particularly important if they

were interacting with vulnerable individuals or volunteering in a different or unusual context.

- **volunteers are supported to find their own opportunities:** where volunteers are self-organising ESV, employers can still play a supportive role. For example, a major retailer recently created a volunteering portal where employees could find their own local projects to get involved with. This was a major shift in how they managed and advertised opportunities previously (cascading PDF ads from the CSR contact through to staff, via regional and store managers).

‘As a broker we often will give businesses a few options, e.g. a business has 20 volunteers and we will give a few options that they can pick from but suggest that the employees themselves pick rather than the organiser so that they are more invested.’ (Broker)

Investing in building relationships with volunteers, not just employers

As highlighted in section 6.3, while volunteer-involving organisations are likely to invest time in trying to build long term partnerships with employers, there is less evidence of this

happening with ESV volunteers themselves, in part driven by the perception of these volunteers as a short-term asset.

It is true that many ESV volunteers do not set out looking for longer term involvement in volunteering, especially in the constraints of the limited time given by employers. However, where ESV volunteers are successfully engaged, they often go on to continue their involvement with organisations, in different (and often more impactful) ways that they might not have considered at the start. One employer, for example, had employees involved in a one-off opportunity – but after a positive experience, several employees had gone on to become mentors with the organisation and one had become a trustee.

The findings suggest that if volunteer-involving organisations want to reap the full benefits and potential of ESV volunteers, they need to build connections with these individuals by investing in them and their experience. Our findings show that in many ways ESV volunteers are similar to non-ESV volunteers: when comparing the motivations and benefits of these two groups, they are broadly similar.

‘When you see trustee listings they can look quite cold...but having gone in and understood what that organisation is all about, it makes it much more real. People from a

corporate background might be unsure, but that softly, softly approach can address the fear of the unknown and it makes it more realistic and meaningful to the individuals concerned.’ (Broker)

Our main *Time Well Spent* report concluded that while people move in and out of volunteering along with their life circumstances, providing a quality volunteer experience is likely to encourage them to come back to volunteering (and volunteer-involving organisations) over their life time. Our research indicates that this is no different for ESV volunteering.

CASE EXAMPLE: Investing in the volunteer experience

Mencap, a learning disability charity, works with a range of employers, who contribute to their mission through a range of volunteering activities, from DIY to transforming rooms at a supported living service or care home.

While they don’t offer ESV on a large scale at present, for them it’s ‘not about numbers’. They focus on a quality experience for volunteers, engaging them during activities, by talking to them about learning disability and tackling the stigma

²⁸ Accenture, 2016

around it, which leads to volunteers wanting to know more and ask questions. They also talk about how people can continue to support them.

Mencap sees one of the key ways they provide a quality experience is ensuring it doesn't feel like work and by celebrating and recognising volunteer contributions: they tweet about their activities on the day and send thank you cards afterwards. These efforts have led to positive feedback from ESV volunteers, with many saying they would like to come back again after their first one-off experience.

8.2. How might we make ESV more inclusive?

This report has highlighted that ESV is dominated by larger organisations, both volunteer-involving organisations and employers. Additionally, for some employees, ESV can feel exclusive. Below, we consider a number of ways that could help make ESV more welcoming and accessible to all, whether they be individuals or organisations.

Providing a range of opportunities to meet different needs and preferences

Employers in our qualitative research recognised that it was important to resonate with employees' personal motivations, but felt this needed to be balanced with accommodating a wide variety of needs and preferences. The primary way they sought to do this, was to provide or support access to a range of opportunities including those with different levels of engagement, and types of roles and activities, including skills-based and non-skills-based opportunities.

Having such a range of options was perceived to be important in engaging people across the whole organisation. The findings suggest that getting a wider range of ESV volunteers involved could increase the diversity of volunteers as a whole, given they are typically in age groups less likely to be volunteer generally.

Adopting a wider definition of skills and experience

We know that many are already contributing skills through their volunteering, but almost a quarter (23%) of recent ESV volunteers reported that they have skills and experience they would like to use in their volunteering but are not currently using – which indicates there is potential for more.

However, employers reported that skills-based volunteering in particular can feel exclusive, and suggested that opportunities could be more inclusive if a broader range of skills and experiences was recognised. For example, employees could be encouraged to share their life experiences. This would also support volunteers who actively want to offer something that is different to their professional or occupational skills.

By highlighting that a broad range of skills and experiences are welcomed, it is more likely that potential volunteers will see that there is something that they can offer. All organisations involved, however, may need to provide more support for their employees in identifying these different skills or experiences.

Recognising that small size can lead to big impact

Making ESV diverse and inclusive goes beyond looking at which employees take up ESV opportunities and extends to the organisations that are involved.

While there may be a number of challenges to working with smaller organisations, several advantages were mentioned – see below. The findings suggest that these unique benefits could be further highlighted.

For volunteer-involving organisations,

- SMEs are more likely to provide smaller numbers of volunteers to manage, reducing the likelihood of large group activities and more suited to the capacity of smaller volunteer-involving organisations
- while SMEs may not have money, they are more likely to put more focus on giving time – in way that is flexible in meeting the needs of organisations
- other evidence shows that SMEs may be able to engage employees better in volunteering in raising awareness of opportunities, sometimes drawing on technology-based collaboration tools.²⁹

‘We don't need large team days, like big corporates look for, we just need to know in what ways we can help. Our team have experience across everything from coding to finance, proposal writing to sales training – we could give this time to charities in a way that they don't get from traditional volunteering opportunities with big corporates.’
(Employer)

²⁹ Sullivan, E and Boyce, D, CSRTech.org (2019), Exploring best practice, tech and potential in corporate volunteerism

For employers,

- there may be greater potential to make a difference: small volunteer-involving organisations may gain even greater impacts from ESV than larger.³⁰
- smaller volunteer-involving organisations may provide more opportunities for local community impact. Differences in the size of organisation could be bridged by matching local offices of national employers with locally-based small volunteer-involving organisations.

Making ESV more ‘small-friendly’

While there is much potential that come with the involvement of smaller organisations (whether it be employers or volunteer-involving organisations), this will only be realised if opportunities and partnerships are open to them. The findings suggest that the current model of ESV does not necessarily fit what smaller organisations can offer or receive.

It suggests that more needs to tailor ESV to these specific contexts of smaller organisations to maximise its potential. This could be through supporting them to access opportunities in the first place, making them more appropriate for their size, or finding ways of getting them involved without the need for financial resources (eg collaborations). Brokers may be best placed in helping both volunteer-involving organisations and employers to think through and support this.

CASE EXAMPLE: Harnessing the unique benefits of a SME

SPEAR, a charity assisting people facing or experiencing homelessness, has a partnership with Acara, a small local property management company. Two senior staff from Acara do maintenance work at its local hostels on a set day each month from a list of needs, from resealing a bath to clearing a garden.

SPEAR recognises the benefits of working with an SME: having smaller numbers of people to manage makes it easy for them to resource and Acara is flexible in responding to their needs. Importantly, the tangible contribution they receive adds real value for them. Acara’s staff, in turn, feel a sense of fulfilment from giving back to a local organisation.

Both organisations feel that a key learning for volunteer-involving organisations working with SMEs is to look beyond financial gain, and focus on the longer-term benefits of working with SMEs who are often embedded in local communities and have considerable influence in them.

This strong working relationship led to SPEAR nominating Acara for the annual Richmond Community Heroes award in the category ‘business contribution to the local community’, which it won.

8.3. How might we create a more positive ESV culture in organisations?

Previous research has focused on the relationships between volunteer-involving organisations and employers. While this is undoubtedly important, our findings highlight that it is often internal challenges within organisations that can be the biggest barrier to moving forward. It also highlights that volunteer-involving organisations and employers face many of the same issues, especially around getting buy-in for ESV.

Below, we consider the ingredients for a positive ESV culture and how this might be achieved.

ESV champions at different levels

In organisations with a positive ESV culture (whether a volunteer-involving organisation or employer), the research identified that buy-in at multiple levels was a key feature. This applied to both volunteer-involving organisations and employers. Firstly, a committed lead who understood ESV and could communicate with different stakeholders including senior management, colleagues and external partners, was seen as essential for helping to drive ESV forward.

However, wider buy-in was also important:

- Both volunteer-involving organisations and employers themselves understood the value of ‘word of mouth’ about positive experiences from volunteers themselves.
- Senior-level buy-in was also important. For employers, senior level buy in was perceived to help, in particular, to encourage employees to feel they could take time to volunteer within their working hours. One organisation, for example, reported carrying out a campaign, led by a message from their CEO in the weekly staff newsletter, to help ‘legitimise’ volunteering time.
- Middle management were also seen as important in increasing the sense of legitimacy among employees to volunteer, as they were typically responsible for direct management of staff and resourcing. The CVN research³¹ highlights that within volunteer-involving organisations, wider buy-in was most challenging at the middle-management level.

Promoting the value and benefits of ESV

Employers and volunteer-involving organisations all recognised that a key factor driving a positive ESV culture was that the value and benefits of ESV were well understood and communicated (across all the levels outlined above).

Within volunteer-involving organisations, this manifested itself in supportive colleagues, who understood the value of ESV volunteers to the

³⁰ CVN, 2018

³¹ CVN, 2018

organisation's work, mission or beneficiaries and supported it.

Promotion of ESV within employer organisations was typically done through internal communications, and where ESV was embedded within organisations, it was used as a medium not just for attracting employees to get involved, but also for recognising those who participated. While employers had mixed views on the extent to which it should be formalised, there was a consensus that it was important to communicate with volunteers about their impact and celebrate it. The different ways they did this included thank you emails, internal awards and newsletters.

Ensuring a joined-up ESV offer

The findings also suggest that for ESV to be embedded in the culture of an organisations it needs to be well supported by wider organisational systems, structures and strategies. Where it was disconnected from these, it was challenging for those managing and delivering opportunities to move it forward. For volunteer-involving organisations in particular, it suggests that the relationship between ESV and other volunteering could be looked at further, where these are not well aligned.

'We're working with our Volunteering Support Unit to become a more integrated part of

the volunteering operations of the charity...We hope this will make us as much a priority as general volunteering, as we'll be included in mailers and overall volunteering policy updates, whilst allowing us to ensure the projects we get involved with are fit for our volunteer demographic.' (Volunteer-involving organisation)

CASE EXAMPLE: Creating a positive ESV culture

Cisco, a large American technology company, offers employees five paid days off per year for staff to volunteer, in addition to annual leave. It promotes a positive culture of ESV in a number of different ways. The executive management team – including the CEO – actively promotes volunteering and they participate themselves, acting as role models for staff. Volunteer stories are shared, from displaying photos in the main office restaurant to encouraging people to share experiences through writing blogs.

Employees can also vote for charities close to their heart, that they want Cisco to officially support by nominating them to be eligible for match funding (\$10 for every hour volunteered). Employees are well-supported with a dedicated contact and a self-serve giving and volunteering platform where they can access a range of supporting information themselves. The process is made as simple as possible, with no approvals needed.

term partnerships, this was not always what employers were looking for.

'Charities have to accept that businesses are not easily or readily and sometime never will be able to commit to long term engagement.' (Broker)

The findings highlight that there is no 'one' model for ESV partnerships as organisations need to establish relationships that suit their different needs. For one employer, longer term partnerships with volunteer-involving organisations that aligned with the area of their corporate strategy to create specific ESV programmes worked well. Another employer found that a model that worked for them was to not have any programmes of their own but have 25 'warm-lead' volunteer-involving organisations, with whom it had developed relationships with over time. This enabled them to have ongoing relationships while still offering a range of different organisations for employees to choose from.

Brokers could play a greater role in supporting the development of appropriate partnerships. Recent evidence suggests their support may help volunteer-involving organisations to increase the number of ESV volunteers and

8.4. How can organisations involved in ESV work better together?

Recognising that one size doesn't fit all

While employers and volunteer-involving organisations recognised the benefits of long-

better identify volunteers that align to the needs of the charity³².

CASE EXAMPLE:

Brokers identifying and matching needs of volunteer-organisations and employers

Voluntary Action Reigate and Banstead has partnered with Skylark, a pro bono charity support network, to carry out a pilot scheme to help volunteer-involving organisations identify their needs and scope time-limited projects that they then match with suitable employers. This pilot was set up to address the issue that Voluntary Action Reigate and Banstead saw in their local area of voluntary organisations not being able to capitalise on the skills which employee volunteers had to offer. So far, they have identified 50 different projects.

As an example, Age Concern Merstham, Redhill and Reigate identified their website as an area needing support - due to staff changes no one was able to update the site. They were matched with a marketing manager from a large pharmaceutical company, who supported them remotely, using his paid volunteering leave. He then trained the Age Concern team on how to manage and updating the site and remains available for queries.

Having honest and up-front conversations

While employers often drive the first contact with volunteer-involving organisations (including via brokers), the findings highlight that volunteer-involving organisations need to be clearer about whether ESV works for them and have the confidence to say 'no' or even signpost to others if it is not a suitable match.

Volunteer-involving organisations may feel this will impact on their ability to secure financial contributions, but prioritising these motivations may be at the detriment of fostering successful relationships in the long run, and delivering volunteering opportunities that truly meet the needs of the charity and its beneficiaries.

These honest and up-front conversations are likely to also promote a wider understanding among employers of what it takes to manage and organise ESV opportunities. This applies in particular to the issue of cost: given that tensions in this area are often driven by a lack of understanding, consistency and conversation (section 6.4), it is important that volunteer-involving organisations are clear about what costs are for and why they are necessary.

'Businesses sometimes have a misunderstanding as to the type of volunteering that we might have on offer... However, in the last couple

of years we have been much better at having upfront conversations with businesses to manage expectations.' (Volunteer-involving organisation)

Being willing to adapt

Where there were successful relationships between employers and volunteer-involving organisations, a common factor was a mutual willingness to understand and adapt. Brokers, in particular, felt it was important that employers did not come with a set, prescribed ESV in mind before discussing opportunities. On the other hand, it was suggested that more could be done by volunteer-involving organisations to understand the employer context. While in many ways their worlds are different, it should be noted, as mentioned previously, that employers and volunteer-involving organisations face a number of shared challenges.

Employers and volunteer-involving organisations applied their willingness to adapt in different ways. For some, it took the form of a journey of learning over time what worked well and less well. For others, it involved working together to put in place ways to get 'on the same page', eg by setting joint objectives or having yearly strategy meetings to discuss what each was looking to achieve.

CASE EXAMPLE:

A successful ESV partnership

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), a conservation charity, and RBS, a bank, have been working in partnership since 2007. Starting out as a relatively small-scale offer, it has since grown, with volunteers now working across over 60 community projects. The two organisations have collaborated to develop a programme which works for them both, whilst also successfully engaging volunteers:

- TCV developed an e-booking platform and moved to a paperless volunteer application form, which allows RBS to book volunteering days quickly, and share information easily. They also provide monthly reports to help capture and communicate the impact their employees make.
- Crucial to the success of their partnership has been RBS's flexibility in the way they offer their volunteers. This means that projects they are involved in are wide-ranging and meet TCV's needs in a variety of ways.

Their partnership has been strengthened through open and honest communication. This has led to TCV actively taking on board feedback from RBS and making improvements to their programme to ensure a more engaging volunteer experience. Conversely, RBS draws on TCV's knowledge of local community needs to identify where they can make the biggest impact.

8.5. How might we make ESV more impactful?

The findings have highlighted that making a difference is a shared aim for those involved in ESV but there are still too many examples of ESV which are high in resource, but low in impact. A number of areas are outlined below for consideration, in thinking about how to create a bigger impact through ESV.

Promoting a greater understanding of volunteering

The conflation of volunteering with team-building (as outlined in section 6.5) highlights wider issues around how volunteering is perceived and the motivations driving requests for ESV. The findings suggest that volunteer-involving organisations and brokers could better support employers to identify and address their primary motivations for ESV requests and, where required, challenge them where ESV is appropriate and not. While ESV can be a way of bringing teams together, this might not be the best way of doing so.

‘A lot of businesses that I’ve had contact with seem to view volunteer days as a ‘free’ team building day and often they can have a set agenda/idea of what they would like to achieve from the day... it’s important to help businesses to

understand that volunteering isn’t that, it’s about sharing a skill, learning a skill and supporting the community. Once they are on board, this message needs to be filtered out to their employees.’ (Broker)

Focusing on shared values to create a bigger impact together

We have previously shown the range of different motivations that drive each group involved in ESV and that these can lead to diverging priorities (section 5.2).

Previous recommendations have focused on volunteer-involving organisations and employers finding areas of mutual benefit to build a positive relationship. It is, however, a balancing act. We have also suggested that there has so far been less focus on the motivations and experiences of volunteers and more can be done to integrate these in the development of ESV opportunities. And, volunteer-involving organisations and brokers in our qualitative research emphasised the importance of ultimately meeting the needs of their beneficiaries.

With so many groups involved and motivations and priorities to balance, the findings highlight the need to focus first and foremost on a common purpose and shared values. This is

likely to ensure that ESV has a positive impact for all involved.

Having a strategy to help drive things forward

The challenges of making ESV a priority in organisations has already been outlined, and it is reflected in the minority of organisations with an ESV strategy in place (section 3.4).

The findings highlight that having a strategy is likely to help ensure that common values are at the heart of the ESV experience for those involved. Where organisations had an ESV strategy in place or where ESV was clearly aligned to a wider strategy, ESV had a bigger internal profile and was more impactful.

The CVN research³³ with volunteer-involving organisations found that those with a strategy in place were 11% more likely to report very positive impacts resulting from their ESV. Employers in our qualitative research also saw having a strategy as helping to drive ESV forward.

Re-thinking measures of success

Challenges with measuring ESV (section 6.5) were perceived to be a barrier to impactful ESV. Volunteer-involving organisations and employers saw a number of ways this could be addressed (and some had already taken steps to take this forward), including:

- **challenging current measures:** some organisations reported actively re-evaluating their measures of success, for example, one employer had stopped

reporting on hours volunteered as they perceived it to be unhelpful.

- **looking at multiple types of impact:** there was a recognition that numbers were effective in communicating to others, especially to senior management, but there was also value in looking more widely at different ways of showcasing impact, eg through case studies and stories. Some suggested that it was important to look at different types of impact such as the impact on the volunteer themselves.
- **collaboration and support:** many felt it was important to work together across organisations. Both employers and volunteer-involving organisations commonly looked for more guidance and support recognising that it was challenging to know how to identify and measure impact. There was particular interest in exploring how there might be an industry standard ‘value of ESV’ and a toolkit for measuring impact, and seeing how this might work for employers and volunteer-involving organisations alike. More widely, there was interest in collaborating in this area and sharing best practice.

‘[There] is a drive to look more at impact than numbers (our current KPI is around number of hours given) but this is where

³³ CVN, 2018

collaboration and communication with organisations is key.’
(Employer)

Recognising there is more than one way of delivering impactful ESV

Previous recommendations have centred around encouraging more skills-based volunteering, with evidence supporting its greater impact. In our qualitative research, some considered that progress had been made, with more employers understanding the value and moving towards skills-based volunteering. But it was also acknowledged that it was not necessarily the only ‘solution’.

Focusing purely on a particular type of volunteering may be less useful than focusing on shared values and identifying the different ways these can be realised through ESV. Different examples of ESV are shown in the case examples, highlighting that there is not ‘one’ way of delivering impactful ESV opportunities.

CASE EXAMPLES:

Organisations delivering impactful ESV opportunities in different ways

1. Creating impact through skills-sharing

Salesforce.org, a software company, helps meet the needs of Shaw Trust, a charity helping young people and adults, by supporting their clients who are trying to set up their own company/ enterprise or become self-employed. They do this by running a series of interactive sessions on marketing, digital skills and building a business, at their head office in London, drawing on staff across various teams who rotate on a monthly basis who share their knowledge and expertise in these areas.

2. Creating impact through collaboration

Snowdrop, a charity for survivors of human trafficking, were looking for support to move offices. Through a city-wide network established by Voluntary Action Sheffield, (Sheffield Business Together) they were linked with a tech company, Arm, and one of their employees volunteered to project manage the move. This extended into a wider collaboration of Sheffield Business Together members, suppliers and contractors who not only did the move but re-designed and renovated and furnished the office too. This involved staff volunteers from different employers helping with activities ranging from engineering to arranging furniture, working together to deliver an office environment that gave the women and children using the office the space and respect they need. The scale and impact of the project could not have been delivered by any one of the fifteen businesses involved.

3. Creating impact by releasing staff to make local communities safer

The police service has a national [Employer Supported Policing Scheme](#) – a partnership where they work with employers to help create safer communities by encouraging them to give paid time off to employees to undertake duties and training in the volunteer roles of Special Constables and Police Support Volunteers. They currently partner with 144 companies. Employer Supported Policing has benefits not just to the employer and community, but also to employees themselves as well as the police service.

8.6. What could organisations managing and delivering ESV consider for the future?

Through this research, our aim has been to create an updated picture of ESV, looking at where it is at now, and bringing in the unexplored perspectives of volunteers, which have been largely absent in previous discussions and research.

To conclude, we provide a number of questions for volunteer-involving organisations and employers to consider (see Table 3). The questions are also relevant to brokers, as they can help them consider where and how they can best play a supportive role across these different aspects of ESV. These questions have been developed in light of the findings, focusing on some key insights:

Firstly, the findings suggest that despite the lack of previous focus on the volunteer experience in ESV, it plays a key role and needs to be considered more. Successful examples of ESV show us that investing in the volunteer experience is worthwhile: where ESV volunteers are engaged and have a good quality experience, there are a range of benefits gained – to the volunteer-involving organisations they help, and their beneficiaries, to employers who support and encourage them, as well as to the volunteers themselves.

This supports our overall findings from *Time Well Spent* which highlighted the positive impacts of providing a quality volunteer

experience on future and longer-term engagement.

However, the findings show that while there are signs of increased interest among employers in ESV and more volunteer-involving organisations are looking for ESV volunteers to help them meet their needs, ESV currently makes up a small part of volunteer participation overall and future interest among potential volunteers is low. Furthermore, though most are happy with their experience, ESV volunteers are less likely to be positive than non-ESV volunteers.

The findings indicate that volunteer-involving organisations need to re-direct more of their focus – which has typically centred on employer-relationships – to volunteers themselves. Employers could also do more to be less prescriptive (eg how employees give their time) and enable volunteers to participate in ways that resonate with their personal motivations.

Both volunteer-involving organisations and employers should also consider that above all, ESV volunteers (like non-ESV volunteers) are motivated primarily by wanting to make a difference: this needs to be embedded in the volunteer experience from developing opportunities to recognising volunteers' contributions.

'It is crucial that [volunteers] have a meaningful experience - we mainly offer client-facing opportunities,

which often results in the ESVs seeing an immediate return on their time investment, as they can see the confidence of the clients grow over the course of the day/session.'

(Volunteer-involving organisation)

Secondly, the findings have highlighted the importance of identifying and focusing on shared values and purpose. Understanding and engaging with the volunteer perspective is not the only consideration for volunteer-involving organisations and employers.

While all groups participating in ESV share a common aim in wanting to improve things and help people, they each have their own motivations for getting involved. Where these are not aligned, it can have a negative impact on relationships and result in high-resource, low impact opportunities. Conversely, where volunteer-involving organisations and employers (sometimes with the support of brokers) focus on shared values and purpose, we see ESV being successful.

Underpinning ESV opportunities with these core values can also help those managing and organising ESV to consider key questions of where it is appropriate or not, and what types of opportunities can best meet needs. We have also seen that the involvement of smaller volunteer-organisations and SMEs can come with unique advantages, and can meet needs in different, but equally impactful ways.

'If we join up ESV and focus on priority social issues, businesses can make a bigger contribution to helping our society and communities a better place to live and work.' (Broker)

Thirdly, while previously the focus has been on external relationships, internal ones matter too. Our findings highlight that it is often internal challenges within organisations that can be the biggest barrier to moving forward. It also shows that volunteer-involving organisations and employers face many of the same issues, especially around getting buy-in.

For ESV to truly have a place and purpose within organisations (whether volunteer-involving organisations or employers), it needs to be supported, by a strategy, a structure which connects ESV with the rest of the organisation's activities, or through colleagues who understand what ESV is for, and its benefits and value.

'Having a positive culture around ESV helps us make a difference in our local communities, and that's really important to our employees. Through repeat volunteering we're able to see the progress and impact of where we've been able to help.' (Employer)

Table 3: What organisations managing and organising ESV could consider for the future

	Employers and Volunteer-involving organisations	Specific to Employers	Specific to Volunteer-involving organisations
Volunteer engagement and uptake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we consider volunteers' motivations for getting involved? Do we provide ways for volunteers to feed into the development of ESV opportunities? Do we capture and listen to feedback and use what we've learned to improve our ESV? Do we make volunteers feel valued and celebrate the impact they are making? Do we help volunteers feel like it's not 'like work' even if it takes place in work hours or they are using work skills? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are our employees aware of ESV opportunities and do we actively encourage them to participate? Are we flexible enough about how we allow volunteers to participate in ESV? Do we make sure employees feel it is their choice to participate, and (where appropriate) play a more supportive role for employees to choose how they participate? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we help volunteers to fit their volunteering around their work commitments? Do we ensure volunteers feel well prepared for their volunteering and manage their expectations before they get involved? Do we put the same investment into building relationships with volunteers, as we do with their employers and non-ESV volunteers, to help them towards more longer-term and meaningful volunteer involvement?
Inclusive ESV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we welcome volunteers to offer a broad range of skills and experience, not just professional / occupational? Do we provide opportunities that fit with organisation of all sizes, including smaller volunteer-involving organisations and SMEs? Could a broker connect us to different types of opportunities or organisations that we've not tried before? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we provide employees with a choice of ESV opportunities to meet their different preferences? Do we consider working with volunteer-involving organisations of different sizes, recognising that each may have unique advantages, for example, there may be opportunities for greater local community impact through smaller volunteer-involving organisations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we consider working with employers of different sizes, recognising that each may have unique advantages, for example, SMEs may be easier to manage and more flexible? Do we make people new to volunteering feel welcomed?
Positive ESV culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we ensure that people have a good understanding of what ESV is and isn't? Can we see how ESV will help us reach our goals? Is ESV connected to our wider organisational systems, structures and strategies? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we have ESV champions at all levels –at senior levels but also middle-management? Are we creating a culture in which volunteers don't feel they have to justify their time to volunteer? Do we celebrate the value and benefits of ESV in our organisation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do our colleagues support ESV and understand the value of ESV volunteers? How does ESV volunteering / volunteers fit with existing volunteering / volunteers?
ESV partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are we open to different types of partnerships? Does this partnership meet everyone's needs? Do we recognise both what we have in common and our differences? Would a broker support us to find more suitable partnerships? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we seek partnerships that make sense, whether it be fewer, long-term partnerships or multiple ad hoc ones? Are we 'translating' our offer into something that is appropriate in the context of the volunteer-involving organisations we're working with? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we say 'no' or signpost to others where ESV doesn't help us make an impact? Do we support employers to understand ESV and explain costs, where they are necessary? Are we clear what our organisation's key needs are that ESV volunteers might help to meet?
Impactful ESV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do our opportunities reflect shared values between the organisations involved, and volunteers' motivations too? Are we sure ESV, or this type of ESV is the best way to reach our goals? Do our measures of success look beyond numbers of volunteers, and recognise wider impacts? Do we have a strategy to help us drive ESV forward? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we know what we want to get from ESV? Do we understand and make clear where ESV is appropriate and not, including that it is not just about team-building? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we support employers to understand what ESV is and isn't for, and challenge them if needed? Do ESV volunteers help us achieve our mission? How does our ESV fit with our wider volunteering strategy?

9. APPENDIX – MORE ON OUR RESEARCH APPROACH

This appendix provides further details of the survey methodology and other details about the approach to this research.

As outlined in Section 2.4, this research draws on a number of different sources. More detail can be found below:

1. Main research findings and further analysis *Time Well Spent* - a national survey of 10,103 people on the volunteer experience.

- This survey was completed by adults aged 18+ in Great Britain through YouGov's panel, via an online self-completion questionnaire between 4 and 15 May 2018. The total sample achieved was 10,103 respondents. The data was weighted to reflect the national population by key demographics: age, gender, education level and social grade. The survey focuses on volunteering through groups, clubs and organisations, known as formal volunteering. More technical details can be found in [Section 10 of the main *Time Well Spent* report](#).
- Further analysis was carried out by

analysing the sub-set of ESV volunteers: those who reported giving unpaid help to a group, club or organisation during work hours and/or organised by their employer in the last 12 months (n=347). We also compared with non-ESV volunteers (n=3498), who were those who did not volunteer but not in the ways outlined above; this, however, excluded those who had never had a job.

2. A range of research and literature on ESV, including: *The Current State of Corporate Volunteering – a third sector perspective* (CVN, 2018) and *On the brink of a game changer* (CIPD, 2015)

- To inform the research, we looked at a range of research and literature (such as those listed below, some of which have been referenced throughout the report), primarily those which related to ESV practice within the last five years. The CVN report was a key piece of research we drew on, as it provided recent evidence from the perspective of volunteer-involving organisations. More on the methodology can be found in [the report](#). The CIPD report was also a key resource as it brought together much of the thinking around ESV at the time where it was under much focus (c.2015).

[The report](#) includes the methodology used.

Research and literature:

- Accenture (2016), *A 2020 Vision for Employer-Supported volunteering* https://www.accenture.com/t00010101T000000Z_w_/gb-en/_acnmedia/PDF-17/Accenture-ESV-Report-V13.pdf (accessed June 2019)
- Burchall, J., Cook, J., Orkney, H., (2016), *Employer Sponsored Volunteering, Realising the Potential* <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management/esv> (accessed June 2019)
- CIPD (2015), *On the Brink of a Gamechanger?* https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/on-brink-game-changer_2015_tcm18-9047.pdf (accessed June 2019)
- Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice, (2019), *Employer Supported Policing: Impact Report* <http://www.ipscj.org/our-work/publications/> (accessed June 2019)
- Corporate Volunteering Network, CVN (2018), *The Current State of Corporate Volunteering – a third sector perspective* https://www.dropbox.com/s/mnju2qus3k7pbzx/CVN%20Report_The%20state%20of%20corporate%20volunteering_third%20sector%20persp.pdf?dl=0 (accessed June 2019)
- DCMS, *Community Life Survey* <https://www.gov.uk/government/collection/s/community-life-survey--2> (accessed June 2019)
- Jackson R (2019), *Are we ready for the future of Employer Supported Volunteering?* <https://robjacksonconsulting.wordpress.com/2019/04/05/are-we-ready-for-the-future-of-employer-supported-volunteering/> (accessed June 2019)
- Rochester, C. and Thomas, B. (2006), *Measuring the impact of employer supported volunteering: an exploratory study*
- Sullivan, E and Boyce, D (2019), *CSR Tech: Explore best practice and tech in corporate volunteerism* <https://csrtech.org/> (accessed June 2019)
- Three Hands (2018), *Employee Volunteering: Is it working for charities?*

<https://www.threehands.co.uk/news/2018/employeevolunteering2018/> (accessed June 2019)

3. Primary research carried out specifically for this report:

qualitative research (interviews, workshops) and written feedback with volunteer-involving organisations, employers and brokers, as well as a round table discussing involving all groups.

- Participants were recruited through a variety of different ways, including: the Corporate Volunteering Network (CVN), and a call for interest which was shared through NCVO blogs and email campaigns to its members and other stakeholders. We also used a snowballing technique to reach people from all groups, through those already recruited.
- The fieldwork was carried out between 11 March and 5 April 2019.
- Workshops, lasting two hours, combined open-ended discussion and interactive exercises for participants to share experiences and generate ideas. During the workshops, researchers also presented some of the key findings from *Time Well Spent*, to get participants' responses. Researchers used a discussion guide, based on research objectives to support and structure the workshop.
- Telephone interviews, lasting 30 minutes, covered key themes from the research, tailored to the audience. Written feedback was captured through a series of open-

ended questions on SurveyMonkey, which participants were asked to complete.

- Finally, a round-table, led by the Volunteering Development team at NCVO included volunteer-involving organisations, employers and brokers. During this round table, emerging findings were represented, followed by a discussion on practice and policy implications.
- Case examples were provided by selected individuals, most of whom participated in the main-stage research, who were asked to provide more detail on particular aspects of their ESV.

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