

Time to volunteer:

Unlocking the power
of volunteer leave



Scouts

Executive summary

Volunteering is kindness in action.
Let's make it easier.

Giving something back strengthens our communities, boosts our wellbeing and creates a closer society. It brings people together and brings out the best in us. I've seen this first hand in Scouts, which is powered by the generosity and commitment of our 140,000 fantastic volunteers.

Across the UK, there are greater demands on charities, and they need volunteers more than ever. But it's harder for people to find the time. As you'll read in this persuasive report, half of those surveyed cited work commitments as the main reason they don't volunteer.

That's why we're calling for every employee to have the right to request up to 35 hours of paid volunteer leave each year. That sounds a lot, and we know businesses have pressures too. However, there's compelling evidence to suggest volunteering is also good for business. Nearly a third of UK adults said they'd feel more productive in their work lives if they could better balance volunteering with job responsibilities. Not only that, volunteering builds those skills employers prize most – initiative, leadership, problem solving and teamwork.

It's time to think differently about volunteering. Together we can empower thousands more to step up and create positive change – for charities, for volunteer, and for business too. Let's make it work for everyone.



Dwayne Fields
Chief Scout



Volunteering is powerful, but under pressure

Across the UK, people feel a strong desire to give back. But time and access to opportunities are preventing them from doing so.

In a changing society, where wellbeing, connection and purpose matter more than ever, volunteering is one of the most effective ways to bring people together and strengthen communities.

Volunteering changes lives, not just for the young people and communities supported by organisations like Scouts, but also for the volunteers themselves. It builds resilience, develops lifelong skills, strengthens communities, and fosters civic pride.

Volunteers are the backbone of UK civil society. **In Scouts alone, more than 140,000 volunteers contribute over 50 million hours every year to help young people gain skills for life.** But the national picture shows a worrying trend: formal volunteering remains low and shows no signs of recovery.

- In 2021/22, just 27% of people volunteered at least once during the year – down from 37% in 2019/20.¹ This was the lowest recorded rate, and it's increased by only one percentage point since.²
- Monthly formal volunteering fell from 23% pre-pandemic to 16% and has shown no improvement since 2021.³

Time is a huge barrier

Despite having a strong appetite to give back, many people simply can't fit volunteering into their working lives.

Work is the strongest barrier to volunteering

48% of potential volunteers cite work commitments as the main reason they don't get involved.⁴

This figure is supported by the Community Life Survey, which has consistently recorded the same barrier at 51% since 2021.⁵

There's limited access to volunteer leave

Research by Perkbox shows that 63% of UK employees receive no paid time off to volunteer.

Only 16% get one day, and just 12% are offered more than one day for volunteering or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.⁶

People want to volunteer flexibly

Recent polling reveals that 39% of people would prefer to volunteer for 1–2 hours per month, rather than commit to full-day activities.⁷

This growing preference highlights the need for volunteer leave to be structured flexibly.

Volunteer leave can address this. It's a simple change with far-reaching benefits for individuals, employers, and society.

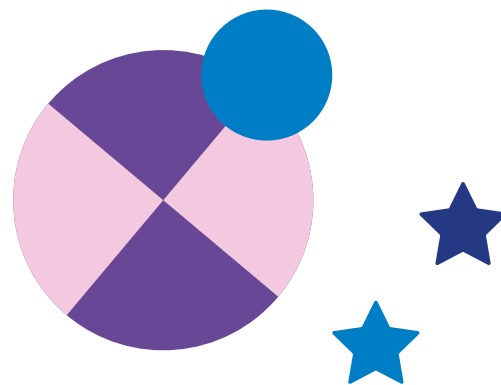
The case for change

Charities across the UK face growing demand, but with fewer volunteers to help.

Meanwhile, willingness to volunteer remains strong. The challenge lies in enabling people to give their time in ways that fit with modern life.

We believe the time is right to embed volunteering more deeply into the national culture by creating space for it in the workplace. Across the public and charity sectors, volunteer leave already exists. Now, we must scale it up.

Our call aligns with the NCVO and ACEVO 2024 manifesto, which urges government to support employers in building a stronger, more flexible volunteering culture.



Benefits for individuals

Volunteering doesn't just benefit communities – it delivers meaningful, lasting rewards for the individuals who give their time. As workplaces and society evolve, people increasingly seek purpose, connection, and opportunities to grow. Volunteering offers all of these and more.

Research consistently highlights the personal value of giving time to others:

Wellbeing

- **75% of recent volunteers say it improves their mental health and wellbeing.**⁸
- It also helps reduce loneliness and build confidence. Only 9% of volunteers report feeling often lonely (vs 13% of non-volunteers), and 15% say they've gained confidence in social situations (vs 5%).⁹
- 35% of volunteers report improved physical health, compared to just 8% of non-volunteers.¹⁰
- Volunteers overwhelmingly find the experience rewarding:
 - 89% say they enjoy it
 - 89% feel they're making a difference
 - 88% report a sense of achievement
 - 87% feel more socially connected¹¹

Workplace benefits and productivity

- **32% of UK adults say they'd feel more productive at work if they could better balance volunteering with job responsibilities.**¹²
- Volunteers build transferable skills, including leadership, communication, and problem solving, which benefit personal growth and career development.

These statistics paint a powerful picture. But behind every number is a real person whose life has been positively shaped by volunteering and having extra time to do it. The stories below show what this impact looks like in practice.



Volunteer voices

'After asking, my company introduced two days of volunteer leave for everyone. I use them for Explorer Scout camps, which helps ease the strain on my 25 days of annual leave.'

Joseph Cox, Bookham Explorers

'I'm able to take up to two days of paid volunteering leave a year in as little as one-hour slots. It gives me the flexibility to support events, prepare activities, and supplement my annual leave for summer camps.'

David Hodgkiss, Group Lead Volunteer, 13th Carlisle Scout Group

'I use my two days of volunteer leave from Nestlé to support Scout camps and DofE expeditions. Without this, it'd be difficult to make time to help young people grow.'

David Coates, Arden ESU – Reivers District

'My employer's special leave policy (up to 10 days) lets me support Scout camps I'd otherwise miss. It's a huge help to our Group and benefits others in emergency services too.'

Josh, 1st Hensingham & Cumbria Scouts Trustee

'I've been involved with Scouts since I was a child and became an adult volunteer. Transitioning into full time work made it harder to attend camps, but my employer's policy of three paid volunteering days a year has made a real difference.'

Cliona, UK Youth Advocate

'I use my one day of volunteer leave for camp. With family commitments, more days would help, as it's hard to fit in everything with limited annual leave.'

Nicki Ghandi, 4th Bookham Guides

'I use volunteer leave to help run our local Guide and Scout Gang Show. It allows me to support this major event without using my holiday, which I can now spend with family.'

Girlguiding employee and volunteer

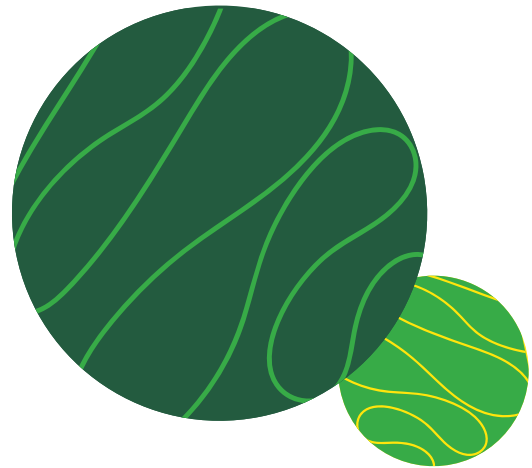
Stories like these show that with the right support, volunteering can thrive – benefiting individuals, employers, and the communities they serve.

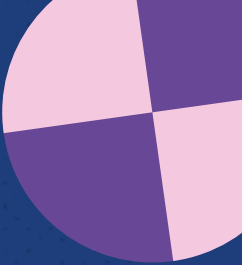
Benefits for businesses

Volunteering is not only good for society – it's a strategic advantage for employers. In a competitive labour market, offering volunteer leave signals a commitment to employee wellbeing, community values, and purposeful work. Organisations that embrace volunteering see measurable gains in engagement, retention, and reputation.

- One third (33%) of the UK public say they're more likely to apply for a job that offers paid time off to volunteer.¹³
- According to Pilotlight's 2022 'Give Your Culture a Workout' report:
 - **77% of employees believe volunteering improves job satisfaction.**
 - 75% say it strengthens their connection to their organisation.¹⁴
- 88% of Millennials and Gen Zs want to work for values-driven companies.¹⁵
- **82% of employees who volunteer feel more committed to their employer.**¹⁶
- 45% of UK adults say they'd feel happier at work with access to volunteer leave, rising to 51% among 18–34-year-olds.¹⁷


Supporting volunteering builds stronger teams, boosts morale, and enhances recruitment and retention. It also positions businesses as values-led, purpose-driven, and socially responsible.





Recent polling reveals that 39% of people would prefer to volunteer for 1–2 hours per month, rather than commit to full-day activities.

Monthly formal volunteering fell from 23% pre-pandemic to 16% and has shown no improvement since 2021.



Case studies showing business benefits

To strengthen the case for change, we spoke to employers across a range of sectors and sizes already offering volunteer leave. We explored how these policies work in practice, their impact, and what lessons they offer for shaping a national model.

At Scouts, every employee is offered 5 days (35 hours) of volunteer leave per year.

A recent survey of 84 colleagues showed high awareness of the volunteer leave policy, with 98% aware and 52% having used it. Of those who used volunteer leave, **36% took between 28 and 35 hours close to the full annual allowance of 35 hours (5 days).**

Colleagues reported using their time to support a wide range of causes, including giving time back to Scouts, fostering panels, local churches, and family-based volunteering. **One employee shared how they used their volunteer leave to support a conference on child poverty — an experience that helped them learn, give back, and create lasting memories.**

BDO

Organisation overview

BDO UK is a professional services firm with around 8,000 employees across 18 UK offices. The firm provides Audit, Tax, Deals, and Consulting, Risk & Outsourcing services to mid-sized, high-growth businesses. They foster a culture that encourages authenticity and social responsibility.

Volunteer leave model

BDO offers employees **10 ‘citizenship days’ annually** through its 5+5 scheme:

- **‘My Action 5’:** Five days for action-oriented activities, such as local volunteering, fundraising, and team giving days.
- **‘My Strategic 5’:** Five days to use professional skills to address societal issues – supporting causes through CV workshops, mentoring, or school engagement.

BDO also provides a **matched giving scheme**, contributing up to £500 per year to match employees’ charitable fundraising. These initiatives reflect the organisation’s belief that when people are equipped with the time and tools to give back, the collective impact is far greater.

Employee testimony

‘Volunteering my time with Scouts has made me feel more connected to my local community and helped me balance what can be a demanding career... It also helps me volunteer as a Beaver Team Leader, giving me the occasional hour to prepare or complete training.’



Jaguar Land Rover

Organisation overview

JLR is at heart a British company, manufacturing Jaguar, Range Rover, Defender, and Discovery. It employs over 35,000 people across two design and engineering sites, two vehicle manufacturing facilities, a components and finishing facility, an electric propulsion manufacturing centre, and a battery assembly centre in the UK. As well as vehicle plants in China, Slovakia, India, and Brazil, and seven technology hubs across the globe. JLR is owned by the Tata Group.

Volunteer leave model

Volunteer leave is key to JLR’s mission, enabling employees to support meaningful causes while fostering a culture of giving back and boosting morale, engagement, and purpose.

All UK and Ireland employees receive **16 hours (two days) of paid volunteer leave** annually to support not-for-profit organisations, focusing on: Youth Development, Reducing Inequalities, Nature & Biodiversity Supporting the Vulnerable.

JLR also runs Motorvate, an employee fund offering financial support, including donations and vehicles, for impactful community projects.

In 2024, UK employees contributed **33,153 hours** to volunteering, reinforcing JLR’s commitment to global citizenship and employee engagement.



Employee testimony

‘Being able to use my volunteering days for Scouts gives me the flexibility to support and deliver events without using annual leave. Knowing these days are available each year means I can commit to activities that create the amazing opportunities for young people. This flexibility also eases the pressure on other adult volunteers who aren’t in such a lucky position to take time off during the work week.’

In 2024, I used one day to help kit out a theatre for the County’s Gang Show, and another as part of an expedition where I led 77 young people on an expedition to Belize. In a previous year, I brought together over 70 colleagues who then also used one of their volunteering days to renovate pathways at a local Scout campsite – something I couldn’t have done alone.’

Michelle Brierley, Policy and Public Affairs, JLR



Tempo Time Credits

Organisation overview

Tempo is a social enterprise with over 16 years of experience promoting volunteering through its unique Time Credits model. The organisation champions mutualism, community engagement, and inclusive participation across England and Wales.

Volunteer leave model

Tempo gives all employees **half a day of wellbeing leave per month (pro rata)** specifically for volunteering, on top of annual leave. The organisation actively encourages staff to use it to support their communities and enhance their wellbeing.

Employee testimony

‘My wellbeing volunteering leave means I don’t have to fit everything into evenings and weekends... I always feel re-energised from engaging with my local community and seeing the difference that volunteers’ time makes.’

Tempo’s model empowers employees to give back in ways that matter to them – supporting Parent Teacher Associations, food banks, local events, or wellbeing checks. The initiative builds staff morale, skills, and social connection, especially in a remote-first working environment.’

Success in Wales

Tempo’s model has had significant national impact. In 2020, with Welsh Government funding, the organisation launched the **world’s first national Time Credit network**, now active across all 22 local authority areas in Wales. More than **560 community groups** have joined, and over **4,222 volunteers** have earned upwards of **50,000 Time Credits**.

An independent evaluation found that 76% of volunteers reported better overall health, with 57% noting reduced use of social care services and 48% reporting fewer GP visits, demonstrating the real and measurable wellbeing benefits of supported volunteering.



ImpactEd

Organisation overview

ImpactEd Group is a small, purpose-driven consultancy supporting education and social impact organisations with evaluation, data, and philanthropy expertise.

Volunteer leave model

All employees receive three days (22.5 hours) of developmental leave per year, which can

be used flexibly to pursue professional or personal development, including volunteering. The organisation also offers flexible working hours, with core hours from 10am–3pm and the rest of the working day structured around personal needs, making volunteering more accessible.

Employee testimony

‘I’m a parent of two children in primary school and spent two years as chair person of the Parent Teacher Association. Being able to use volunteering hours to help raise money for my children’s school and not lose out on leave was brilliant... I still volunteer with school clubs and Scouts. It lets me get involved in activities that benefit hundreds of children.’

Impact Ed’s model demonstrates how small businesses can successfully build in time for social contribution, offering employees the flexibility and support to stay involved in meaningful community work.



Benefits for communities and society

Volunteering plays a vital role in strengthening the fabric of our communities. Charities, local initiatives, and public services increasingly rely on volunteers, especially as demand for support continues to grow.

However, many people are held back by a lack of time or workplace flexibility. Flexible volunteer leave makes it easier for people to contribute consistently and meaningfully to their communities. This helps build stronger neighbourhoods, increases local capacity, and supports more resilient public services.

Social impact and community wellbeing

- Volunteers are more likely to feel connected to their communities, trust others, and engage civically with benefits seen across all backgrounds.¹⁸
- Volunteering plays a vital role in tackling local social, economic, and environmental challenges. It helps revitalise neighbourhoods, strengthen social ties, and build community resilience in the face of pressure and crises.¹⁹

Economic and public value

- **Expanding workplace volunteering could unlock between £2.2 and £3.9 billion in productivity gains across the UK economy.**²⁰
- Each regular volunteer generates an estimated £18,000 in social value per year through their time and contribution to services.²¹
- 78% of consumers say they're more likely to support businesses that engage with their local communities, demonstrating the reputational value of community investment.²²

Together, these benefits demonstrate that flexible, supported volunteering is not only good for individuals and employers, but is essential to building thriving, connected, and resilient communities. A more accessible, employer-supported model of volunteering can help close service gaps, strengthen social cohesion, and empower people to shape the places they live.

To unlock these benefits at scale, we need action. That's why we're calling for a practical, national solution – one that empowers people to give their time without sacrificing their income or work responsibilities.

Our proposal

We're calling for a right to request up to 35 hours of volunteer leave per year, which can be taken flexibly in hours or days.

This policy would:

- Empower more people to give back in ways that work for them.
- Relieve pressure on charities facing shortages of time and people.
- Help embed a stronger national culture of volunteering.
- To acknowledge there is good practice in businesses like BDO.

Volunteer leave isn't just a benefit. It's an investment in people, in communities, and in the future of civil society.

Thank you to the fellow organisations jointly supporting this campaign: Girlguiding, St John Ambulance, and Sea Cadets.



Appendix

- ¹ Community Life Survey 2021/2022
- ² Community Life Survey 2023/2024
- ³ Ibid
- ⁴ Scouts Omnibus Survey 2024
- ⁵ Community Life Survey 2023/2024
- ⁶ Perkbox 2019. perkbox.com/resources/blog/giving-back-is-good-for-others-and-good-for-you
- ⁷ Scouts Omnibus Survey 2024
- ⁸ Time Well Spent Survey 2023: ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/time-well-spent-2023/volunteer-experience-impact/
- ⁹ Royal Voluntary Service, “Volunteering- a powerful social prescription” report, March 2022
- ¹⁰Ibid
- ¹¹Time Well Spent Survey 2023: ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/time-well-spent-2023/volunteer-experience-impact/
- ¹²Scouts Omnibus Survey June 2024
- ¹³ Scouts Omnibus Survey June 2024
- ¹⁴ Pilotlight (2022). Give Your Culture a Workout: How Volunteering Strengthens Organisations. pilotlight.org.uk/news/give-your-culture-a-workout-new-report
- ¹⁵ Deloitte (2022). Millennial and Gen Z Survey. 2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/millennial-survey.html
- ¹⁶ Pilotlight. (2024). Why volunteering is the key to boost employee wellbeing. Retrieved from pilotlight.org.uk/news/why-volunteering-key-boost-employee-wellbeing**Pilotlight+1Pilotlight+1**
- ¹⁷Scouts Omnibus Survey June 2024
- ¹⁸Fox, S. (2019) Volunteering and its Effects on Social Capital and Wellbeing in the UK: Insights from the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Study [Preprint]. [doi:https://wiserd.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Volunteering-and-its-Consequences-using-UKHLS.pdf](https://wiserd.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Volunteering-and-its-Consequences-using-UKHLS.pdf)
- ¹⁹Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2024). Unleashing the potential of volunteering for local development. OECD Publishing. doi.org/10.1787/deab71bd-en
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- ²¹Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021). Measuring the Social and Economic Value of Volunteering in the UK. ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/volunteeringinuk/2021
- ²²Edelman (2023). Edelman Trust Barometer 2023. edelman.com/trust/2023/trust-barometer



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scouts.org.uk/volunteer-leave
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