Case study: Different ESV models in action – Girlguiding Scotland

Context

This case study highlights how a range of employers across Scotland support their staff to volunteer with **Girlguiding Scotland**. Through examples of individual Girlguiding volunteers, it showcases the different ways that ESV can work in practice.

The examples demonstrate a range of employer-supported volunteering (ESV) approaches, showing how models such as paid volunteering leave, flexible working and matched funding enable employees to contribute their time and skills while balancing work commitments.

For employers, these examples illustrate how different types of support can remove barriers to volunteering and strengthen employee volunteer engagement. Themes from across the examples are pulled out in a final "key learning" section at the end of the document.

Example 1: Diane, Global Communications Lead at a finance company

Diane volunteers as a Rainbow (age 4-7) and Brownie (age 7-10) leader and works at a global banking company in her day job. The staff there are always reminded of their social responsibilities and are encouraged to support charitable causes and to give back to their communities. Diane is able to take 1 day of paid leave a year to volunteer. She is also able to apply for grants from her employer of up to £500 per year to match the number of volunteering hours she has done for Girlguiding Scotland. She has been able to apply for one of these grants for her Brownies in the past to support trips away like camp and a science sleepover.

Diane said: "The commitment my organisation has to giving back inspired me. Prior to working there I hadn't fully realised the impact people can have on their communities by just giving time and skills. The fact volunteering is a core value in my organisation makes me feel supported in my volunteer role."

Example 2: Cara, Design Engineer at an engineering and manufacturing company

Cara is a Rainbow (age 4-7) leader and her work offers flexible working patterns, meaning that she can leave early on days that she runs her Rainbow units. It saves her the stress of rushing to make meetings on time.

Example 3: Sarah, Senior Scientist at an environmental consultancy

Sarah's employer enables her to take part in Girlguiding camps or trips by providing her with an additional day of volunteering leave a year as these outings often take part during the working week. All employees - even those who work part-time – are able to take this leave. The leave can be taken as a whole day or in smaller chunks.

Sarah has also been able to apply for a small grants and donations scheme available for staff-led fundraising. With the help of the grant Sarah was able to keep the cost down when taking her Guide (age 10-14) unit on a trip to London making the trip accessible to more girls!

Sarah said: "Having a supportive employer means they care about us as people and what we do in the community. It doesn't matter what you use your volunteer leave for, but giving us that extra day means we can all give something back to the communities we live in."

Example 4: Sarah, Customer Resolution Advisor at an energy company

Sarah volunteers as a Guide (age 10-14) leader at Girlguiding. Her employer offers every employee within her team 2 days of paid volunteering leave per year. They also support community projects close to local offices. Sarah was able to secure £500 from her employer to go towards a climbing frame for their local Brownie house. Her employer also offers match funding up to £500 and free sport kits.

Sarah said: "Being supported by my employer has meant we have been able to raise money towards a climbing frame and has allowed me to use my 2 paid days to go to events."

Example 5: Susan, an office manager in the business, consulting and management industry

Susan's employer, despite being a small business, was flexible with her volunteering and provided her with resources and paid time off to attend Girlguiding Scotland's large scale event Amsterdam Adventure 2025 with her Guide and Brownie units last year.

Susan said: "Being supported to take paid time off made me feel valued as a staff member and volunteer."

Example 6: Louise, Senior Service Designer at the Scottish Government

Louise is a volunteer leader of a Guide (age 10-14) unit who works flexible hours which is a big help with her volunteering commitments. Her employer also provides 6 days paid volunteering leave annually through an organisation-wide policy.

Louise said: “It allows me to go on longer trips and adventures with my unit and it’s easy to request as special paid leave.“

Example 7: Heather, assistant marketing manager at a bank

Heather’s employer supports volunteering in a number of ways. Staff get “a day to make a difference” where they can volunteer for the day on a project of their choosing. Many choose to volunteer with their team or department on a team volunteering day and Heather likes to organise this for her colleagues.

The bank she works at also offers two types of funding their employees can benefit from. They match fund any fundraising staff do up to £500 a year and also donate £10/hour for time spent volunteering per year (also up to £500) to the charity that is being volunteered for. Staff can find information on the support provided on their intranet.

Heather has used the offered funding for buying sports equipment and funding travel for her Brownie (ages 7-10) unit. Heather was a Brownie leader but is not currently an active volunteer. The funding has also unfortunately stopped in recent years.

Heather said: “It’s been a great way to get extra funds into our unit!”

Example 8: Laura, Economist at an energy company

Laura receives 4 days of paid volunteer time off a year which means that she can attend events during working hours (e.g. summer camps with Girlguiding) without using annual leave. It makes the decision whether to help at events much easier. She also receives time off to do unit/district accounts. Funding which has been provided from her employer over the years has helped her units (she is a Guide leader) purchase things like tents. This enables the Guides to take part in more activities but at the same time helps reduce time spent fundraising.

Laura said: “Being supported by my employer means I can volunteer and give more of my time than I might otherwise have managed. The funding and time off over the years has meant many Guides have benefited from activities or the equipment purchased to support the activities.”

Example 9: Charlotte, Actuarial Consultant at a business and finance company

Charlotte is a Guide (age 10-14) leader and also a treasurer for her guiding district (a wider area of several units). Charlotte's employer provides 1 paid volunteering day a year. In the past, she has used it to prepare for and set up guide camps, or for trips if they are on a weekday. Her employer requires her to provide a risk assessment and insurance details for the activity.

Example 10: Kirsty, Deputy Partnership Accountant at a law firm

Kirsty benefits from an additional day of volunteering
leave meaning she doesn't have to rely on her annual holiday allocation alone when taking her Guides away on trips. The day of volunteering leave can also be split and taken as two half-days. Throughout the rest of the year, she is able to work from home on unit meeting days as she also is a Rainbow leader. Due to their young age (4-7) the Rainbows often meet earlier in the day. "It saves the stress of commuting and getting back for an early Rainbows meeting which I would not otherwise be easily able to do."

Kirsty said: "I really appreciate the additional support my employer provides. Knowing that I don't have to dip into my holidays, means that I am more able to commit to weekends or longer trips away with Guides, and can give them access to these experiences."

Example 11: Jane, Administration officer for the Scottish Government

Jane's employer and colleagues regularly support her when she needs to leave early on her Brownie night. She is also able to request volunteering leave and uses this for her role as Guide camp helper, or for other guiding activities within the working week. The Scottish Government allows up to 6 days of special leave per year to be used for volunteering, doing something that aims to benefit the environment, individuals or groups of people, fitting in with Scotland's Volunteering Action Plan. Last year, as a team, her office also spent a day clearing undergrowth at Abbotsford House.

Jane said: "I'm so lucky my employers offer very flexible working and leave. My colleagues are all aware of my volunteering and I'm often offered crafting odds and ends etc to use with my unit."

Example 12: Karen, Senior Project Manager at a bank

Karen is a senior project manager at a bank. She is able to work flexible hours to fit around her volunteering commitments as a Brownie leader and she claims money for her volunteering from her employer at £10 per hour for up to 50 hours - meaning £500 a year gets donated to her unit.

Example 13: Heather, Practice Manager & Head of Client Payroll at a finance company

Heather is a Brownie (age 4-7) and Guide (age 10-14) leader and works full time as a manager at a finance company. Her employer provides resources, flexible working patterns and paid time off to volunteer.

Heather said: “My employer's support helps me to volunteer to the best of my capabilities while working full time. “

Example 14: Colette, senior software engineer at a bank

Colette’s employer ‘pays’ her £10 per hour for the volunteering she does as a Rainbow (age 4-7) helper. The maximum amount per year is £500, which will help her unit to pay their annual subscription fees. Units need to be registered charities to apply for the funding.

Example 15: Janice, Domestic Supervisor at a school

Janice’s employer lets her use the school’s resources for free and offers flexible working patterns to support her volunteering as a Guide (age 10-14) leader.

Janice said: “I don’t feel so stressed about organising events if I can arrange time off for attending them. Also, it’s so helpful that the school can lend me some resources.”

Key learning

- **Offer different ways to participate.** A mix of volunteering leave, flexibility and funding allows more employees to get involved.
- **Recognise volunteering as valuable**. When organisations actively encourage volunteering, employees feel supported and more likely to participate.
- **Financial support amplifies impact.** Small grants or matched funding can enable community groups to deliver more activities.
- **Flexibility removes barriers.** Adjusting working patterns can make a significant difference for employees with regular volunteering commitments.
- **Formal policies and informal support both matter.** Clear policies help embed volunteering in organisational culture, but supportive managers also play an important role.

Knowledge Gateway

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