



# The Value of Volunteering

Volunteering in Education and Productivity at Work

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# The Value of Volunteering: Volunteering in Education and Productivity at Work

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January 2021

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The front cover image captures volunteers from the world of work, supporting young people in remote events organised via the Inspiring the Future platform during the COVID-19 pandemic. Copyright Education and Employers.

## ***Peter Cheese – Chief Executive, The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development***

Volunteering is a vital part of thriving economies and societies. Work done by volunteers accounts for almost 1% of the UK's GDP, or almost £20 billion according to research by the Office for National Statistics and NCVO.<sup>1</sup> They also estimate that last year around 1 in 3 people, or almost 20 million people formally did voluntary work through groups, clubs or organisations at least once during the year, and at least half of us did some form of informal unpaid work to help others.

The CIPD and Education and Employers are themselves both charities and also rely on volunteers for important parts of the work we do. At the CIPD we have thousands of our members who volunteer in supporting our community, but also through volunteering programs that help bring the experience of HR practitioners to help others to work and to progress. Through these means, we have supported programmes like Inspiring the Future and Inspiring Governance, and both organisations also participate together in research to raise the understanding of the value that volunteering brings.

We are therefore delighted to share this new research from Education and Employers, the first of its kind connecting the benefits for employers and employees of volunteering in schools and colleges, analysing different volunteering activities and different areas of benefit.

The report highlights not only how this type of volunteering can help with developing critical employability skills for those that volunteer, but also how it can have a hugely positive impact on their mental wellbeing and motivation. In the context of the pandemic with all the concerns of people's wellbeing, this is more crucial than ever. From other CIPD research we can also see that the pandemic has increased people's interest in volunteering and wanting to help others in these challenging times. Having employers and managers who are supportive of their employees doing voluntary work has therefore never been more important. But it is also very important to make the case for the benefits they get in return, as time is precious and people are under significant pressure.

Overall, it's clear to see from the research that employers who support their staff to take part in meaningful volunteering work will be rewarded with reinvigorated employees benefitting from improved skills and competencies. Furthermore, this will help in retaining people and becoming an employer of choice for the best talent in the future.

But of course, the other huge value of having employees volunteer in schools is the benefits it brings to young people. The more young people are exposed to the world of work, the more it helps them understand the opportunities, how they should position themselves, the core skills that most help them, and to give them the confidence to aspire. In these times, sadly young people in particular are being impacted by the slowdown in the economy and jobs and recruitment opportunities. Not only have their social lives and education been impacted, but also with the economic slowdown as recruitment becomes tighter, their access to the job market has become harder.

So this report is also very timely. Reminding us all of ways in which we can make a difference, and that by helping others, we are also helping ourselves. Helping a young person to progress and succeed is one of the most rewarding things any of us can do, and something they never forget.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/volunteering/>

## ***Laura Roberts – Director of Skills Development & Participation, Health Education England***

In a time of huge uncertainty, amidst a national pandemic, where our communities rely on my NHS colleagues to support all of our health and wellbeing, it is vital that we provide our own staff with opportunities to take a moment.

Volunteering in educational settings, through programmes such as NHS Ambassadors with Inspiring the Future and Inspiring Governance, offers us that moment. It gives us some time to self-reflect on our own career journeys; it helps us to reconnect with communities through young people. When we take time out to volunteer, to speak to young people about the breadth of NHS careers available, about the huge variety of work we do, we see reflected back that spark of enthusiasm that led us on our own paths in those early days.

As this report clearly demonstrates, employer supported volunteering initiatives in education work. They inspire future generations to walk in our shoes. They also develop and strengthen our own skills.

Volunteering gives our staff an opportunity to broaden their experience, whether that's through volunteering on a governing board, or being challenged to present to a group of young people in an assembly, hungry to learn and absorb our experience and knowledge. Volunteering that is supported by employers encourages staff to talk more positively about their employers.

As staff we are proud to work for the NHS, and proud to share our enthusiasm for our careers.

I welcome this timely report into *Volunteering in Education and Productivity at Work* and I value our strong relationship with Education and Employers, offering our own staff worthwhile volunteering opportunities.

## Executive Summary

Volunteering in education has the ‘win-win’ potential to benefit employees and their organisations, at the same time as radically improving young peoples’ life chances.

At the Education and Employers charity, we have been supporting people from the world of work to volunteer in schools and colleges since 2009, publishing peer-reviewed research on the benefits for young people’s confidence, career aspirations, attainment and employment outcomes. This latest research reveals the ‘*mirror benefits*’ for volunteers, drawing on a survey of 1,026 volunteers, detailed volunteer case studies and the broader empirical literature.

We find that volunteering in education enhances employees’ ‘skills & competencies’ at work as well as their sense of ‘motivation & mission’, which translates into higher ‘productivity & career gains’:

- **Skills & Competencies:** 80% or more volunteers reported benefits for communication, influencing & relationship skills with over half also benefitting for leadership and other skills.
- **Motivation & Mission:** 79% reported improvements to their sense of mission at work as a result of volunteering in education – and 68% reported greater motivation at work.
- **Productivity & Career Gains:** 26% report greater productivity at work, with 44% of them reporting manager recognition for the impact of their volunteering. More than a third even said volunteering had helped them apply for different or more senior roles.

And volunteers know that what they do makes a difference: over 99% describe impacts for young people and 94% felt they gained a better understanding of society and social issues. Putting these impacts together, volunteers also report significant wellbeing benefits as a result of their volunteering, such as 84% describing benefits for their motivation in day-to-day life outside of work.

Employers and their HR and CSR managers play an essential role, both facilitating opportunities for staff and also ensuring their volunteers and organisations gain the greatest possible benefit. Volunteering should be part of regular conversations across an organisation, relevant to training and development, team building and brand awareness, as well as reflecting CSR objectives.

We find that volunteers report greater benefits to their work when employers structure volunteering using the following principles:

- **Proactive facilitation:** Employers more actively introduce volunteering opportunities.
- **Line manager recognition:** Line managers support volunteering and recognise the benefits.
- **Integration into the culture:** Employers manage the process of volunteering-as-skill-development strategically, integrating volunteering into HR appraisal and staff development.

Our results suggest volunteering as a mentor is particularly helpful for relationship building skills and becoming a school or college governor particularly helpful for decision-making. But it is not just about high-commitment volunteering programmes. While more volunteering hours are linked to greater gains, smaller activities can have comparably powerful benefits. For instance, over half of those volunteering just two days a year or less report benefit in at least one of five areas of tangible career benefit: work satisfaction, productivity, promotions, earnings or job applications. Similarly, shorter and more flexible activities like taking part in career insight talks had medium or high-strength benefits for eight out of the eleven skills analysed.

When employers help volunteering, it is rewarded with loyalty: two thirds of volunteers are more likely to speak positively about their employer and half are more satisfied at work. Such loyalty can reduce costs associated with turnover and improve how staff interact with customers and partners. Indeed, if we consider the productivity benefits flowing from well-being and motivation, as well as brand and CSR value, volunteering may be one of the best investments an employer can make.

## Introduction

*“The intelligent way to be selfish is to work for the welfare of others.”*

Volunteering is a major part of UK life. The NCVO reports 19 million of us volunteered through a formal organisation at least once in 2018/19. About 10% of volunteering takes place via employers, a growing trend since 2010 (IVR, 2015) and one expected to keep on growing (NCVO, 2019).

The quote at the start of this section, attributed to The Dalai Lama and echoed in the inset quote from our survey, reflects the widely-held view that volunteering is both a private and a social good. Indeed, researchers have identified benefits in well-being (Yeung et al, 2017) and skills (Deloitte, 2008).

In this research, our focus is on volunteering specifically in schools and colleges:

- What skills and competencies do volunteers feel they gain most from volunteering?
- What concrete career benefits do volunteers gain, such as in productivity or promotions?
- How can employer actions and volunteering focus enhance these benefits?

These questions are important to the Education and Employers charity because we have engaged with over 60,000 volunteers to facilitate over 2 million interactions with young people since 2009.

*“It is important to dedicate your time to helping others as you also get a reward of understanding and knowledge in return.”*  
– Survey respondent (male, 35, working in telecommunications, Yorkshire and Humber)

We know our volunteers’ time has tremendous benefits for young people – shaping career choices, enhancing confidence and increasing motivation at school (see inset box on our previous research) – and we know that many of our volunteers are motivated by this potential to transform lives. Anecdotally, many of our employer partners also describe business benefits of supporting volunteering, even where this is not the primary motivation. This research draws on the benefits that volunteers report at work, contributing to the evidence base behind these anecdotes and behind our partners’ intuition.

### The impact of volunteering: Example benefits for young people

- Young people who can remember 4+ activities with employer volunteers from their school days (e.g. work experience, enterprise events, mentoring) are nearly twice as likely to find it **easy to pursue their career ambitions** and 42% **less likely to be NEET** in their early 20s (Mann et al, 2017).
- GCSE students who had three careers talks were more motivated and **revised harder** than a control group, which translated into higher grades – the equivalent of one student in a class of 25 **beating their predicted grades** in Science, English & Maths GCSEs (Kashefpakdel et al, 2019).
- A programme of 10 careers talks at age 14-15 typically correlates to an **increase in earnings** worth 8% at age 26, as demonstrated using a major UK longitudinal dataset (Kashefpakdel & Percy, 2017).
- Our research has shown how authentic employer engagement is important for **tackling stereotypes**, inspiring young people to **imagine different futures**, and **reducing disconnects** between aspirations and labour market reality – see more at [www.educationandemployers.org/research-main](http://www.educationandemployers.org/research-main).

This research draws on three sources: an online volunteer survey, volunteer case studies and a review of empirical research. This report builds on our earlier study (Percy & Rogers, 2020) which focused on well-being benefits for volunteers in full-time employment; in this report we expand the focus to all volunteers with knowledge of the world of work and a broader set of benefits.

The online survey comprises 1,026 volunteers, collected between November 2018 and March 2019 from volunteers in the *Inspiring the Future* and *Inspiring Governance* programmes and via partner networks supported by the CIPD. Six survey respondents were identified as case studies for qualitative follow-up, based on individuals reporting high skills gain in key areas of interest, such as communications and leadership.



*Volunteers present to children at a Primary Futures event*

## Findings: Skills & Competencies

Reports into volunteering have revealed support for skills development from managers as well as volunteers themselves.

Researchers and HR experts typically reflect on how learning skills in new and different environments away from work results in staff having to build relationships with new and different people. Being forced out of a comfort zone can be highly beneficial for skills gain. Levels of reported impact vary depending on the question framing and the survey sample, but typically identify significant proportions who identify skills gain from volunteering activities in general and high levels of confidence among managers.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development champions skill development through volunteering, as seen in their report

‘Volunteering to Learn: Employee Development Through Community Action’ (Stuart, 2014). This CIPD study highlighted the diversity of skills that employers felt volunteering could develop (see Schematic 1), drawing on 13 case studies with diverse employers, supported by an interview programme with employee volunteers and charities.

*“As a young person myself I have found volunteering to be an extremely effective way to develop my own confidence, public speaking and general communication skills. It has given me the chance to really promote my field and the concept of apprenticeships in a time that they are neglected when it comes to further education choices.”*  
- Survey respondent (male, 22, South East)

Schematic 1: Skill development by type of volunteering (Source: CIPD research, Stuart 2014:30)

Activity \ Skill	Community awareness	Confidence	Coaching and mentoring	Communication	Networking	Team-building	Professional knowledge	Self-awareness	Workload management	Creativity
One-to-one mentoring	X	X	X	X			X	X		
Skills workshops	X	X		X	X			X		X
Schools career talks	X	X		X				X		
Community youth projects	X	X	X	X		X			X	X
Mentoring charity leaders	X		X	X	X		X			X
School governor/trustee position	X	X		X	X		X			
Supporting charity infrastructure	X						X		X	
Pro bono work	X						X		X	
Offering work experience	X	X							X	
Volunteer days	X			X	X	X				X



A landmark report from 2010, 'Volunteering – The Business Case', examined the value to employers of the skills staff developed by volunteering in the UK (Wilson & Hicks, 2010). The study, which Education and Employers advised on, covered 16 businesses and 546 volunteers, as well as a sample of line managers. The majority of respondents reported skills development in areas like communications, managing others (including specific skills in setting performance goals, coaching, counselling, assisting with training and development, and evaluating performance), adaptability, and influencing skills. Line managers verified these areas of skill development, confirming that improvements were noticeable in their business, typically measured as part of the standard competency frameworks used to monitor staff development at their respective workplaces.

Deloitte (2017) conducted a survey of 1,000 US adults, aged 18 and above, employed full- or part-time, and who had volunteered in the previous 12 months. 36% said volunteering can help develop new skills. HR managers are also typically very positive about the potential of volunteering. In an earlier study, Deloitte

(2008) surveyed 250 Fortune 500 HR managers about whether contributing business skills/expertise to a charity, in a volunteer capacity, can be an effective way to develop skills – 91% agreed it helped business skills and 90% agreed it helped leadership skills.

A 2006 report by the Chartered Management Institute found that 60% of managers agreed or strongly agreed that international volunteering assignments are an effective learning and development tool (Wilson & Hicks, 2010). Studies within individual organisations confirm these findings. According to a 2005 survey of staff at Barclays Bank, managers saw the greatest impacts on increased communication and leadership skills within their staff (Wilson & Hicks, 2010). Over half (55%) of managers reported gains in both communication and leadership skills.

The testimony from one of our case studies, a senior manager in the West Midlands, explains the kind of skills transformations that sit behind these statistics, as he reflected on how his volunteering as a school governor had helped him improve his planning and management skills:

*“Being a governor is a big commitment, you have to be prepared to put in the time. It is mainly outside work hours so I had to become better organised. I am reporting to senior individuals, so it is very important to be prepared and not just turn up.*

*I have got a family and I work 50 hour weeks. Volunteering has helped me to plan everything I do around family and work. Volunteering is great, but it can't take over the other things.*

*I didn't used to plan so much, I just went from day to day, with a monthly plan for work. I had to become a better diary manager. Now I plan months ahead. With the people I hold to account as a governor, that is vital.*

*Since moving into a management role at work I know how to plan things, how to say things. And I know how I want people to report to me. Now I have been forced to manage my own diary I can manage my team more effectively.*

*I have received some training from my employer and some from volunteering. Together these have really helped me.”*

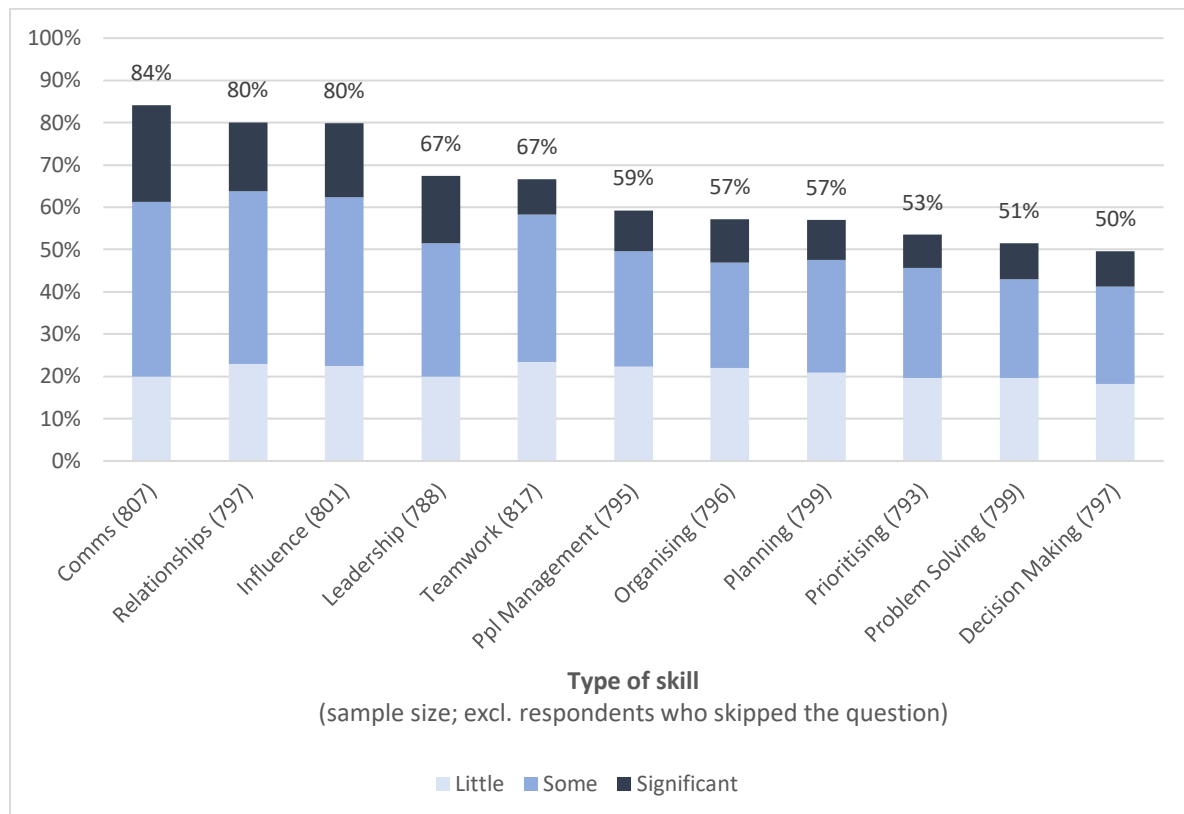
– Senior business manager in the West Midlands (male)

The views of managers and HR and CSR leaders about the business benefits of volunteering affords confidence that volunteers' own assessments are not self-serving or simply a validation of their own choices.

In our survey focused on people volunteering in education we deliberately covered a wide

range of skills and set a high bar for impact. For respondents to indicate a “*significant improvement*” in a particular skills area, we asked them to consider whether volunteering had caused “*a material improvement that can be applied on a regular basis*”. The results are set out in Figure 1.

Fig 1: Reported level of skills gain from volunteering in the education sector



It is striking that 80% or more reported benefits for communication, influencing and relationship skills with at least half of the sample of volunteers reporting at least some level of benefit in each skill area.

Considering the high bar set for “*significant improvement*”, volunteering appears particularly impactful in communications, with 24% reporting such impact.

The importance of supportive employers also comes through in the data on communication skills. For instance, 68% of volunteers whose employers had facilitated or encouraged their volunteering reported some/significant skills

gain in communication, dropping to 60% among those volunteers who said their employer either only passively supported them or was disinterested in volunteering. Fortunately, the majority (64%) of these volunteers reported getting positive support from their employers. Similar patterns are present for other skills – proactive support from employers is not necessary for skills gains from volunteering, but it does make such gains more likely.

One of the volunteers from Inspiring the Future is an entrepreneur in London. She explained to us how volunteering improved her communication skills, providing tangible benefits back at her business:

*“When I came [to] this country, I faced challenge[s] with communication, not so much linguistically but culturally. I now work with several different nationalities. Some cultures think or approach things differently so it can be difficult to communicate with people from different backgrounds. My volunteering has helped me to bridge that gap.*

*The topics that I [volunteer] on might be how to start a business without investment, such as when I spoke to some children through Inspiring the Future about starting their own business using only the income generated.*

*Back at work I struck a deal based on bartering. The communication skills which I developed through [Inspiring the Future] helped me to negotiate. I was sceptical at first, but my communication skills helped to secure the deal.”*

– Entrepreneur in London (female)

Another of our volunteers is an NHS call centre manager in Yorkshire. He told us that volunteering had helped him to develop his skills in influencing others:

*“I use my skills to influence the students and also with my work colleagues to work with NHS ambassadors.*

*There are things you don’t gain insights into without going into schools. It’s about using your skill sets in the right way.*

*Every school and group is different. I read noticeboards to pick up things about that school and the students, to see how schools approach them to try to best influence them.*

*Rather than having a standard presentation I try to modify it to the students and their aspirations. It’s important to tailor it for each one.”*

– NHS call centre manager in Yorkshire (male)

This testimony from volunteers captures the sense that skills gain from volunteering is far more than just the technical acquisition of the skill, such as might be gained from a hands-off training course. By practicing the skill in an environment which the volunteer values, by seeing the impact on young people or in the education system, volunteers feel the time is well spent and the skill more fully internalised. In this way, skills gain comes alongside motivation and a sense of mission.



Volunteer takes part in a Primary Futures activity

## Findings: Motivation & Mission

Prior research has shown that volunteering increases employees' commitment to their employer. A survey of 385 employees in Michigan asked respondents how often they volunteered for an activity sponsored by an employer and included measures of organisational commitment (Brockner, Senior, & Welch, 2010). The study found that organisational commitment is highly correlated with the frequency of their volunteering.

Our own data differentiates between motivations inside and outside of work (see Figure 2). As expected, volunteers derive considerable benefit from helping others (99%) and feeling more motivated outside of work (84%). What is remarkable is that such a large proportion (68%) also feel more motivated at work, despite the volunteering having ostensibly little to do with their employer's core work activity in most cases.

Fig 2: Reported areas of benefit from volunteering in the education sector

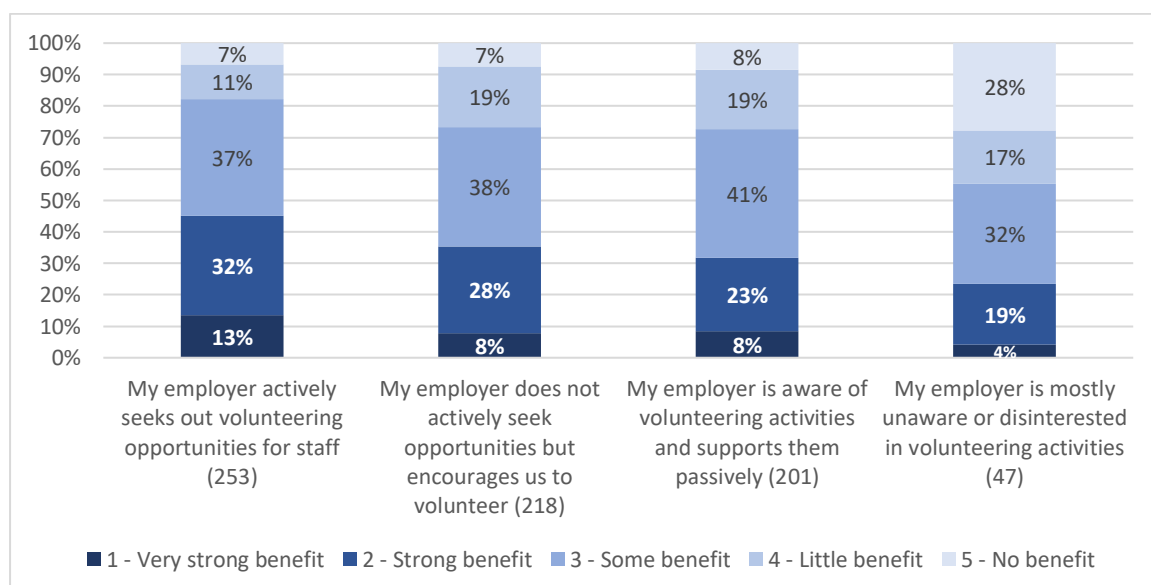
Area of Benefit	Total*
Satisfaction from helping young people / give something back to society	99%
Better understanding of society / social issues	94%
More motivated in day-to-day life (outside of work)	84%
Opportunity to meet new people and grow network	78%
Fun / break from work	78%
Closer relationship with local schools	76%
More motivated at work	68%

\* The percent of question respondents who indicated some, strong, or very strong benefit in the area

Where employers are more proactive in their support of volunteering, volunteers are more likely to report an improvement for their motivation at work, although there is no such similar pattern for the benefits of volunteering on outside-work motivation.

Figure 3 shows that 45% report strong or very strong benefits on work motivation if their employer proactively sources volunteering opportunities, compared to only 23% if the employer is mostly disinterested.

Fig 3: Reported impact on work motivation by employer support for volunteering (sample size in brackets)



We also see volunteers describing striking impacts on attitudes that are relevant in the work context (see Figure 4).

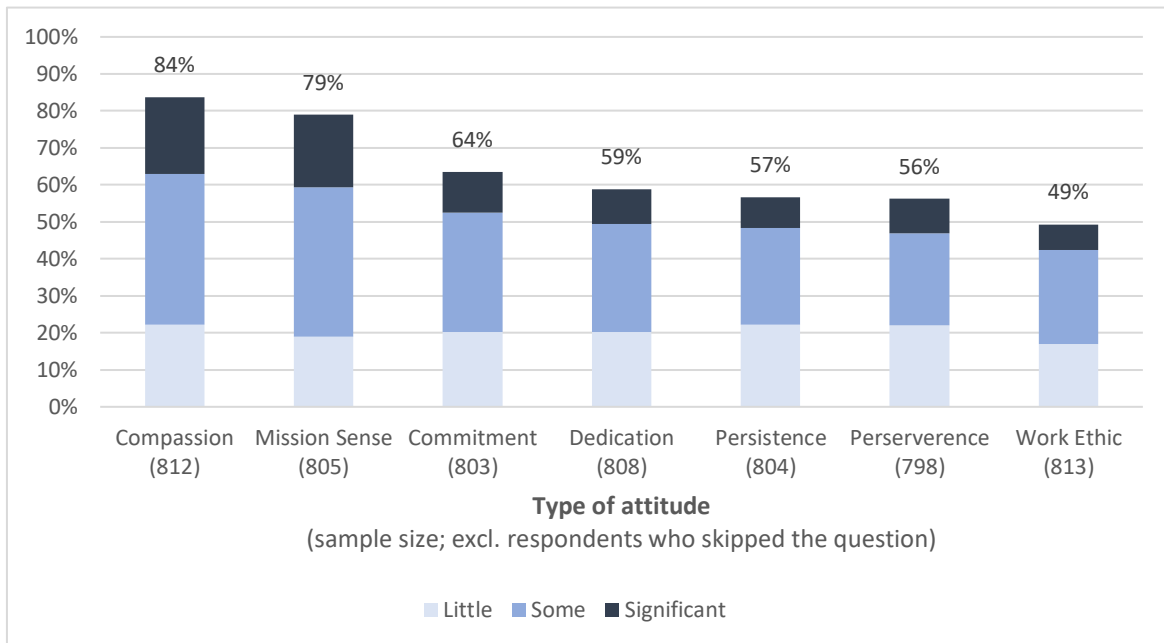
Compassion and mission sense appear very high on the list, with 20% or more reporting a significant, material shift in this attitude that they can regularly use in a work context, and around 80% or more reporting at least some level of benefit.

Attributes that commonly form part of hiring or performance evaluation criteria also appear in Figure 4, with 56%-59% of people reporting benefits for their perseverance, persistence, and dedication.

*“Although I work in a charity - my role is 'insurance' (which can appear to be dull) and I have tried to encourage this sector locally to become more involved in career talks (they are usually noticeably absent from careers fairs) and to also consider diversity (the sector often looks to recruit from same mainly affluent areas/schools). We need to also talk to children from inner city schools which are often more racially diverse.”*

- Survey respondent (female, 56, West Midlands)

Fig 4: Reported level of attitude shift from volunteering in the education sector



With attitude shifts in terms of compassion and commitment, it is important to highlight that volunteering has benefits for wellbeing more generally. Other researchers have examined the relationship between volunteering and health outcomes, findings reinforced by testimony from our survey respondents and case studies (Tabassum, Mohan, & Smith, 2016). The mean health score was best among those who were involved in frequent volunteering and worst among those who never volunteered. People

who volunteered had healthier mean GHQ scores (10.7) than those who had not volunteered (11.4).

*“I think volunteering helps to ease mental problems, as you start to focus on others and their plight rather than just looking inwards. I feel better for making a difference.”*

- Survey respondent (male, 42, Investment Management, London)

Another study used the Survey of Texas Adults from 2004, a state-wide representative sample of 1,504 adults aged 18 and over (Yeung, Zhang, & Kim, 2017). Participation in certain volunteering activities were correlated with improvements in several areas of health: 8.5% for mental health, 9.1% for physical health, 7.4% for life satisfaction, and 11.1% for social well-being, as well as a 4.3% decrease in depression, with results holding true when accounting for relevant socio-demographic variables.

This dual benefit of skills gain and motivation

or mission is a particularly powerful effect of volunteering.

*“Volunteering helps me feel more connected to others and appreciated. I shouldn't have to volunteer to feel this, but it does provide a good opportunity to get out and make a difference”*

- Survey respondent (female, 49, NHS, Yorkshire and Humber)

Testimony from one of our volunteers captured this idea of a “lightbulb moment”, where they felt inspired by their experience of volunteering:

*“I act as a mentor with small groups of children over a school year. We try to build confidence, empathy and understanding. Some of the children would engage, some wouldn't. As a result of my volunteering I better understand that people are in different situations. Then, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> session, one child opened up to me about their situation. After that they were fully onboard with every session.*

*Volunteering is about the difference you can make by being someone different, not the teachers. You are not there for anyone's gain but theirs. Some young people don't get that normally. That is what makes volunteering worthwhile.”*

– Senior manager in the West Midlands (male)

Engaging with different groups of people from those typically found in the business environment helps foster empathy and develop relationship building skills, contributing to this volunteer's interpersonal effectiveness and enhancing his performance at work.

*“I enjoy the opportunity to share what I have learned in education, work and life with young people who are perhaps not reaching their full potential.”*

- Survey respondent (female, 37, Local Government Authority, East Midlands)

*“Volunteering for me is motivated by a wish to encourage young people to enter medicine, particularly from non-standard schools.”*

-Survey respondent (male, 56, Medicine, South West)

## Findings: Productivity & Career Gains

Our survey data in the preceding sections have described gains in work-related competencies, particularly communications, relationship building and influence, as well as material shifts in attitudes for some volunteers, such as sense of mission, perseverance, and work ethic. We now turn to the labour market consequences of these benefits, examining productivity and career gains.

The previously mentioned Deloitte (2017) survey of 1,000 US adults further revealed that 18% believe volunteering enhances their career opportunities. Direct career impacts are less commonly identified than skills gain, perhaps related to the difficulty employees can face in translating skills into pay rises or promotions. Nonetheless, there is a strong relationship with labour market requirements. Volunteering has been found to complement professional competences, skills and qualifications to ease transition and assist labour market access and progression (Zainea, Toma, & Tohänean, 2019).

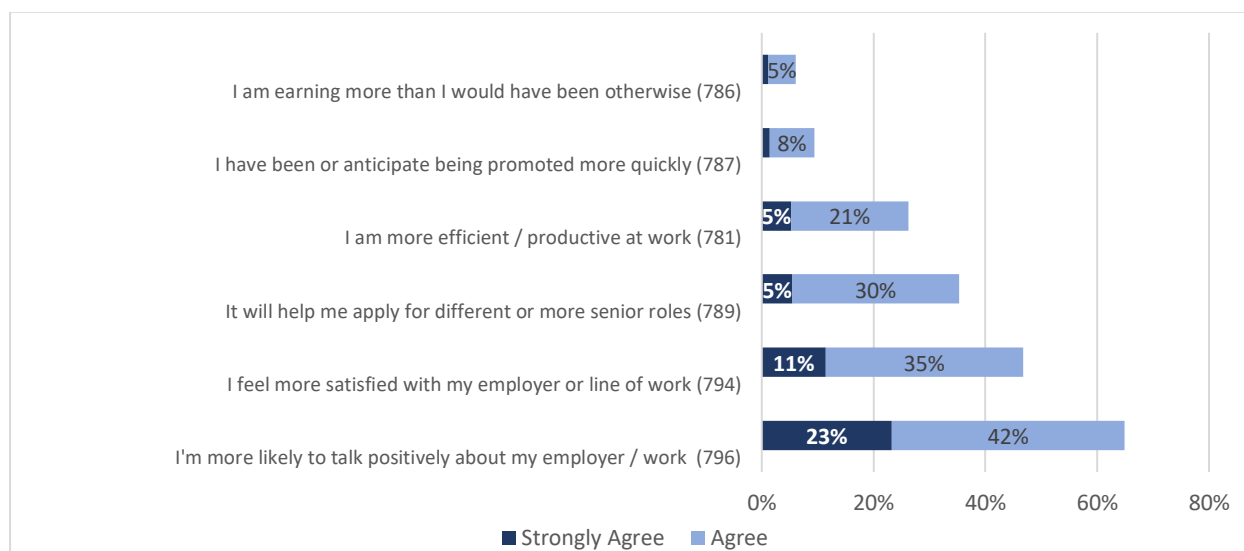
The 'Benefits of Employee Volunteer Programs' report shows that employers

benefit from volunteering as a result of employees who are more productive and satisfied. Cited evidence includes more positive attitudes from their staff who volunteer, higher job satisfaction, and higher retention rates. Employers whose employees volunteer gain a more highly skilled workforce (Junior Achievement, 2009). In this context, it is unsurprising that many leading employers provide 2-5 paid volunteering days per year.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, the Building Community initiative by the University of North Carolina unites those with and without disabilities to participate cooperatively in community services. Special education teachers credited the program with students being more likely to see tasks through to completion. There were also gains in problem solving skills, learning to adapt to certain situations, as well as being able to react differently to various situations (Miller, et al., 2002).

Our survey asked whether volunteering had made, or was likely to make, a difference to the respondent's circumstances at work, through such factors as earning more or being promoted more quickly (see Figure 5).

Fig 5: Reported level of career benefit by volunteers (sample size in brackets)



<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Glassdoor reporting in May 2019 (<https://www.glassdoor.co.uk/blog/time-off-volunteer/>)

Over one third of respondents (35%) reported that volunteering will help them to apply for different or more senior roles. 9% of respondents have been or anticipate being promoted more quickly as a result of their volunteering, while 6% are earning more than they would have otherwise.



*Volunteers network at an Inspiring Governance event*

Focusing on how volunteering helps volunteers apply for different or more senior roles, our survey respondents reported similar levels of benefit regardless of how structured the volunteering activity it is or the scale of commitment. As seen in the inset quote, even light touch activities like taking part in career insight talks can shift how a volunteer is feeling about their day and their work.

Among the three types of activity where our volunteers reported spending the most time, two typically required extensive long-term commitments (being a school governor and mentoring) while the other was more ad hoc and flexible around the volunteer’s capacity

(giving career talks or taking part in career networking events). While governors and mentors report more benefit for such role application potential than those supporting talks/fairs, this is only around 0.2 standard deviations higher for governors and 0.1 higher for mentors – the equivalent of one in 20 switching from disagreeing that the volunteering would help such promotion chances to agreeing with it. If we consider those who report some skills gain for communication, there remains a slight outperformance for mentors but similar results as for governors. These benefits from school governing and mentoring may also relate to the training and support that such volunteers can often access as part of their volunteering, as well as the skills and competences gained directly from volunteering.

*“Volunteering gives me a sense of balance, particularly when speaking honestly with young people about work and future opportunities.”*  
 - Survey respondent (female, 44, Professional sports person, South East)

Over one quarter (26%) of the respondents agreed that they are more efficient or productive as a result of their volunteering activities in education and – as shown in Figure 6 – respondents felt that their managers typically agreed with their assessments around benefits.

*Fig 6: Volunteer responses to the question: “Do you think your line manager or boss recognises that these benefits are linked to your volunteering?”*

<b>Line Manager Sees Benefits</b>	
Clearly recognises	12%
Partially recognises	32%
Does not really recognise	23%
Does not recognise at all	12%
Not applicable	21%



Like any activity, the more you put into volunteering the more you get out of it. But what our volunteers report is that even modest amounts of activity, say the equivalent of a day or so across the year, is enough for benefits to start being felt.

*"I just like giving something back and working with younger children who have the imagination to think differently to those of us who have been moulded by school, university and work. I hope to inspire the children but they also help inspire me!"*

- Survey respondent (female, 37, Structural Engineering, Senior manager, South East)

24% of those volunteering for 2 days or less a year report they are more efficient or productive at work as a result of their volunteering. This increases among those who volunteer more often, eventually up to 61% for the small set of survey respondents who report volunteering for the equivalent of 15 or more days a year, including time in the evenings and at weekends.

*"I recruit teachers. Being a governor has given me a better understanding of senior managers. I understand the challenges schools face and what goes into their decisions. It has given me credibility with my clients and better understanding of their situation so that I can work out better solutions."*

- Senior manager in the West Midlands (male)

A key benefit to participation in education volunteering is introducing more people to the work you do and helping them understand why you chose to do it. For employers, this is a direct benefit for talent pool development, albeit one that is not the focus of this report. However, as indicated by

If we consider a wider range of tangible career benefits - work satisfaction, productivity, promotion speed, earnings or applying for new roles - 53% of those who volunteer for 2 days per year or less report that their education volunteering helped with at least one of those areas of substantive benefit, increasing to 73% among those volunteering the equivalent of 15 or more days per year.

In this way, volunteers can get started small, experiment with different types of volunteering until they find the one that suits them – it's highly likely they'll feel some benefit even at low levels of volunteering, which might encourage them to do more in the future. As seen previously, where volunteers feel supported by their employer, perhaps getting the chance to meet other volunteers who have been doing it longer, they may be inspired to expand their commitment.

And of course sometimes, volunteers in education themselves work in education-related fields. In this case, the benefits can be even more transparent, as one of our case study volunteers explained to us:

the quotes from survey respondents below, some volunteers also find this to be part of their motivation and satisfaction from volunteering – they are sharing what they love, supporting both their sector and the young people in their local schools and colleges at the same time.

*"[I volunteer to] promote diversity and equal opportunities within the civil service as a chosen career choice to highlight all entry routes to create and empower students. We do not wake up as a student and one day decide 'I'm going to be a civil servant!' I hope that my volunteering will change that mindset for many for their future career choices."*

- Survey respondent (female, 49, Civil Service, West Midlands)

*"I am a doctor and my main reason for volunteering is to encourage more young people to consider this as a career option to improve the future workforce."*

- Survey respondent (female, 38, East Midlands)

*"Really useful to understand different perceptions of occupations and make a difference at grass roots level which is ultimately our talent pool for future employment."*

- Survey respondent (senior manager, Female, 37, North East)

*"I volunteer because I genuinely want to inspire young people to be the very best they can be."*

- Survey respondent (male, 35, Senior manager, West Midlands)

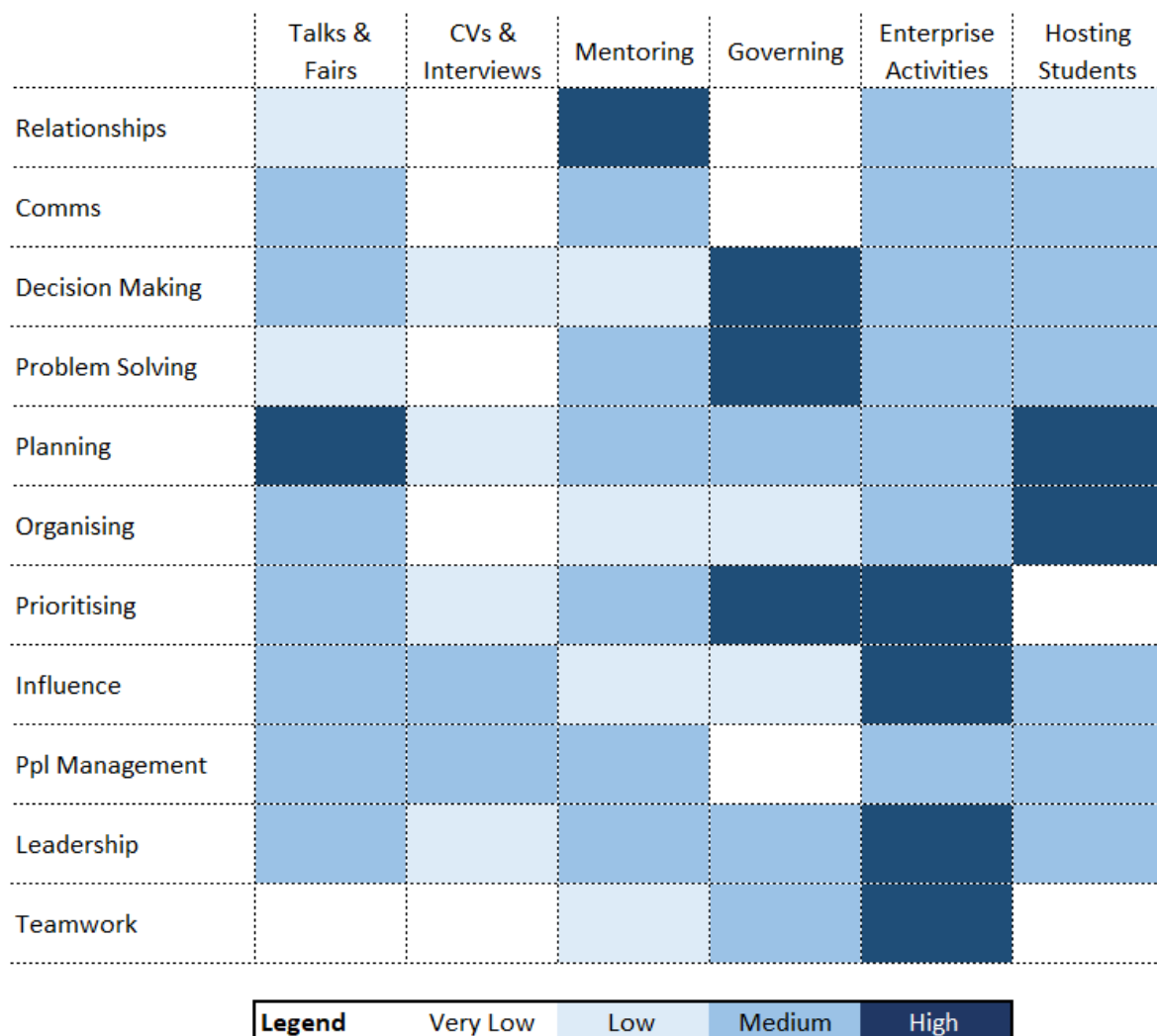
## Findings: By Volunteering Type

Our research affords a tantalising opportunity to investigate the types of volunteering activity which respondents were most commonly doing when they reported skills gains in particular areas.

Figure 7 reveals a number of average skills gain patterns that can be related intuitively directly to the nature of the activity. Mentoring emerges as the strongest driver of

relationship building. Governance is strongest at decision-making, problem-solving and prioritising, with strengths also for leadership, teamwork and planning. Hosting students relates most directly to planning and organising. Respondents who were involved in enterprise activities were more likely to report skills gains in leadership, teamwork, prioritising and influence.

Fig 7. Indicative average reported skills gain by type of volunteering



\* Results driven by an ordinal logistic regression for level of reported skills gain (robust standard errors, with control variables for respondent personal background and employment circumstances); the odds ratio threshold for a High classification is 1.6 (p-values typically < 0.025) and 1.3 for a Medium classification 1.3 (p-values typically 0.05 – 0.15). Activity participation modelled as a dummy for any level of participation, excl. activities with n < 150. Typical sample size n=610-625 (analysis excludes respondents who did not declare a single type of education volunteering, did not provide control variables, or did not answer the skill in question).

Volunteering for activities like careers talks, career networking and fairs emerges as a well-rounded activity, with links to most skills except teamwork. Its strongest link is with planning, which may reflect the need to plan content for sessions and the way survey respondents often volunteer for multiple activities a year.



*Inspiring the Future volunteer talks with students*

Supporting CVs and mock interviews is linked with fewer skills than other activities, perhaps reflecting the highly focused nature of that support. CV/interview support is nonetheless positively related to people management and influence, resonating well with the purpose of such activities to draw on knowledge of and reflect on hiring processes and then to influence young people to change their current approach where required.

This analysis relates the types of activities volunteers told us they did to their overall view on skills gain. In this way, the results are more indicative than those in previous sections where respondents' perspectives are directly reported. Nonetheless, this approach can provide insights on skills that are less influenced by subjective assessments and the received wisdom regarding types of volunteering. Nonetheless, it is possible that patterns of volunteering and perspectives in skills gain might vary structurally by different types of respondents, so the analysis controls for such potential factors and reports the average of patterns within each subgroup, e.g. by gender, by level of seniority at work, by

employment status and by region of the country.

### **Results by student age range**

It is also possible to analyse skills gain by student age range. However, we need to bear in mind that some types of activity are structurally more common at certain age ranges than others. For instance, supporting enterprise/skills competitions was more common among those working with university students and governing was more common among those volunteering at the primary age demographic, there being far more primary schools than other education institutions at which to be a governor. For this reason, we use a separate regression model that controls also for the types of volunteering activity a volunteer participates in.

The skills around relationship building, with some similar patterns for leadership and people management, appear to be more strongly correlated to working with secondary age students or a university setting. One hypothesis is that the greater institutional complexity of such educational settings is such that there is often a greater range of relationships to navigate as part of volunteering.

*"The more I volunteer and meet other volunteers the more I gain appreciation of the importance of supporting these activities. There are some great volunteers who are helping raise aspirations of young people. It makes such a difference!"*  
- Survey respondent (female, 29, working in the North East)

Teamwork benefited more if working with older age groups, being particularly strong in adults, perhaps relating to adults being a closer match for the types of teamworking relevant in the workplace. Working with adults was also particularly correlated with reporting skills gains for problems solving. Those volunteers working with upper secondary school students reported

particularly strong skills gains for influence, which will come as no surprise to as anyone who has tried to persuade older teenagers of anything.

Volunteering in primary schools was most strongly related to skills around prioritising, organising, and planning. This may relate to governing being a common activity when volunteering to support this age range. However, the pattern remained present even when controlling for type of activity, indicating that something about working in a primary setting or with primary age students may be useful for these skills. It is possible, for instance, that because working with such young students is so different from the typical

working environment, more advance preparation is required to think about how to engage the students and present material in an appropriate manner.



*Volunteer uses props to engage children during a Primary Futures activity*

## Conclusion

Our survey finds that volunteering in education enhances employees' skills & competencies at work as well as their sense of motivation & mission, which collectively translate into higher productivity & career gains:

- **Skills & Competencies:** 80% or more reported benefits for communication, influencing and relationship skills with over half reporting benefits for leadership and decision-making.
- **Motivation & Mission:** 79% reported improvements to their sense of mission at work as a result of volunteering in education – and 68% reported greater motivation at work.
- **Productivity & Career Gains:** 26% report greater productivity at work, with 44% of them reporting manager recognition for the impact of their volunteering. More than a third even said volunteering helps them apply for different or more senior roles.

**And volunteers know that what they do makes a difference: over 99% describe impacts for young people and 94% felt they gained a better understanding of society and social issues.**

*“Volunteering has helped me to understand other people’s situations, increasing my empathy with their situations, such as if they are disadvantaged. As a governor, I am working to improve the results of the schools, so I think that perspective is hugely important.”*  
- Survey respondent (senior Business Manager, 34, West Midlands)

These findings replicate the evidence from a wide range of studies on volunteering in general, providing confidence that volunteering in schools and colleges is a valuable tool for employers to use in engaging, supporting, and training their staff. Key areas for further study include analysing these patterns by volunteer characteristics,

such as gender, socioeconomic background and ethnicity, and connecting these self-reported workplace benefits to productivity gains experienced by employers, such as drawing on the testimony of managers and HR staff or analysing company data on employee performance and progression rates.

In concluding, we want to reflect on how employers and managers might get the greatest benefits from volunteering.

One key finding is the value of employers’ being more proactive in their support of volunteering. We found that 45% of survey respondents reported strong or very strong benefits on work motivation if their employer proactively sourced volunteering opportunities, compared to only 23% if the employer was mostly disinterested in volunteering.

Other studies have explored the role of managers in detail. The CIPD (Stuart 2014) and Wilson & Hicks (2010) argue that the best opportunities come when employers treat volunteering as part of their learning and development approach.

In order to realise the greatest benefits, employers must manage the process of volunteering-as-skill-development strategically and integrate volunteering into HR appraisal and personal development. Volunteering can then be seen not only as a nice thing to do but as a positive for the employee and employer, part of employers’ development of their employees (Stuart, 2014). Investments in volunteering can then be seen as an investment in human capital - and treated accordingly in management accounts and budgeting exercises (Blackmar & LeRoux, 2012).

In our survey results, it is striking that many of the reported skills gains remain in place across highly diverse education volunteering roles and even among those that volunteer few hours. This suggests that employers might benefit from encouraging a diverse range of volunteering opportunities, rather than being

driven by a particular top-down selection of activities. In this way, staff and their managers/mentors might identify the volunteering activities that best fit their interests and needs as well as their possible priorities for training and development.

Over time, volunteers may naturally increase the number of hours they volunteer and gravitate towards volunteering activities involving longer-term levels of commitment – we often see this among our long-serving volunteers who decide to apply for school governor roles. Volunteers and employers can expect to see greater benefits as a result, particularly once they start volunteering for two or more weeks a year (it adds up quickly with a day or so a month). **But the key message from this analysis is that even small**

**activities, perhaps just a few hours or a couple of days a year, is enough for volunteers to report benefits at work.**

When employers help volunteering, it is rewarded with loyalty: two thirds of volunteers are more likely to speak positively about their employer as a result and half are more satisfied with their employer or line of work.

Volunteering is a cost-effective way to develop skills, embraced by many employers as part of their learning and development strategy for their staff. One of the Inspiring the Future volunteers, a Medical Physicist in the East of England, explained how volunteering improved her leadership skills. She said that:

*“Volunteering improved my leadership because you have to think about how to describe your job. You have to do it yourself. It is that sense of self leadership. You have to be quite direct and clear about what it is you are trying to convey to the young people you are speaking to.*

*I can say to people who aren't doing this at work how volunteering demonstrates the importance of being able to communicate outside of your field and gives you a chance to practice it that you might not have at work.”*

– Medical physicist in the East of England (female)

Leadership benefits are also highlighted by Gordon and Gordon (2017). They describe how accepting leadership roles within volunteer organisations allows the learning, testing, and evaluating of new methods of leadership and skill enhancement. These skill sets can then be transferred and applied to different settings. This hands-on experience, learning by doing, can be contrasted with formal training courses to improve management and leadership skills that typically cost around £1,000 in London.

Testimony like the above points towards volunteering as an alternative or complementary way to develop these skills, while bringing other benefits. Not only do employees improve their skills, they also feel

more dedicated to their employer, more positive about work and more satisfied at work.

Financial assessments of volunteering also support it as a cost-effective approach to training. Wilson & Hicks (2010) estimated that the full cost of volunteering, including lost time for organising and attending activities, was an average of £381 per person per year. This is lower even than the direct cost of training at £400 per person per year (average across the companies in their study), which itself excluded several indirect costs of training. The report concludes that volunteering is a cost-effective way to gain and develop skills.

If we consider productivity benefits beyond skills gain, such as those flowing from well-being and motivation, as well as its inherent

brand and CSR value, volunteering may be one of the best investments an employer can make.

*"The rewards from being part of the [Inspiring the Future] program are priceless."*

- Survey respondent (female, Civil service, Senior manager, London)



*Two volunteers at an apprenticeship event hold up a sign saying, "I love volunteering with Inspiring the Future"*



## Appendix: Survey overview

This report is based on a survey of 1,026 volunteers, collected between November 2018 and March 2019 from our own Inspiring the Future volunteers and via partner networks.

The skills and benefits covered by the survey questions are the following:

- Teamwork/Ability to Collaborate
- Work Ethic
- Dedication
- Persistence
- Compassion
- Commitment
- Perseverance
- Sense of Mission
- Relationship Building
- Communication
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Planning
- Organising
- Prioritising
- Influence Others
- People Management
- Leadership

On relationships with their employer, the survey questions asked whether the respondent agreed or disagreed with the following:

- I am more likely to talk positively about my employer or line of work to people outside the organisation
- I feel more satisfied with my employer or line of work
- I am more efficient / productive at work
- I have been or anticipate being promoted more quickly
- I am earning more than I would have been otherwise
- Volunteering will help me apply for different or more senior roles

[View the survey](#)

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## About Education and Employers

**Education and Employers** is an independent UK-based charity launched on the 15th October 2009 with the vision of “providing children and young people with the inspiration, motivation, knowledge, skills and opportunities they need to help them achieve their potential”. It has revolutionised the way young people interact with the working world – it is no longer limited to the jobs their parents do, who their parents know, or the alumni that went to their school. Some two million interactions between young people and volunteers from the world of work have taken place to date. Education and Employers undertakes high quality robust research on education and employer engagement that informs education policy and practice. The charity also collaborates with other leading research institutions and ensures that research produced by academics around the world is easily accessible to practitioners, employers and policy-makers.

The charity runs **Inspiring the Future**, a free service that uses innovative match-making technology to connect volunteers with state schools and colleges quickly, simply and at scale. Over 60,000 people have already volunteered in the UK; they come from all levels – apprentices to CEOs – and all sectors – app designers to zoologists. Over 80% of English secondary schools have registered, together with 4,000 primary schools. People can volunteer in a local primary (**Primary Futures**) or secondary school to chat informally about their job and career route, take part in a careers speed-networking session, give careers insights, provide mock interviews or feedback on CVs, through to serving as a governor or trustee. At the start of lockdown in spring 2020, the charity began work with teachers to pioneer **virtual interactive activities**, enabling students to continue engaging with the world of work. Schools and volunteers alike say these sessions boost morale as well as inspiring and motivating students about the relevance and importance of their learning. These new virtual activities break down barriers by allowing schools and volunteers to connect flexibly across the UK, regardless of their local area.

Education and Employers remains passionate about getting skilled and committed volunteers into school and college governance at a time when education needs strategic leadership the most, through the **Inspiring Governance** and **Inspiring Further Education Governance** recruitment services. Funded by the Department for Education and the Education and Training Foundation respectively, these services give volunteers a chance to deepen their involvement with schools and FE colleges at a strategic level by becoming a member of a governing board. The important role of governor helps people give something back to schools and communities by using their current skills and experience to make the right decisions for young people. Volunteers also develop board level experience and new skills that they can take back into the workplace. Importantly, 97% of placed governors would recommend governance to a friend or colleague and those placed via Inspiring Governance get a support offer from our partners the NGA. The charity is also working with partners to diversify school governance through the joint **Everyone on Board** campaign.

## About CIPD

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The registered charity champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years. It has a community of more than 150,000 members across the world, provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development. [www.cipd.co.uk](http://www.cipd.co.uk)

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PUBLISHED JANUARY 2021