

Blossom, health  
through activity



# Corporate Volunteering



- Our aim is to educate and share ideas and solutions to meet the challenge of the climate crisis. We want to develop the horticultural area to become a centre of excellence to encourage visitors to engage positively with the climate agenda by discovering greener ways of living. Volunteers are helping us to achieve this goal.
- Where? - In and around Wythenshawe Park horticultural centre

Painting: from time to time we need to repaint areas to freshen up walls, equipment (potting tables). Preparation and cleaning is part of this work. This is 'as' needed rather than always on offer.



## Volunteer tasks:

Gardening: This may include weeding, watering and feeding. Plant care, pathway clearance, planting, and digging. Weather will determine the actual tasks on the day. We have indoor and outside facilities. The horticultural centre is beautiful and always in need of plant care because things grow so fast in the heat. The plants are tropical. We have areas that are in disrepair which need clearing and preparing for use.



Blossom, health through activity has had over twenty businesses take part in Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) in the last two years. Amongst those regularly taking part in corporate 'give back' volunteer days are Chiesi, Dyno-Rod and Bank of New York. They have also successfully worked with the Benevity platform to look for companies who want to be involved.

Group volunteering sessions are a fantastic opportunity for employees to work together on a rewarding practical project. Sessions (half or full day) are a great way for a business to deliver their corporate social responsibility and give back to the local community. Volunteering at the park provides a sense of achievement and an opportunity for colleagues to catch up and get to know each other away from the office. Volunteer work and donations are always appreciated, they make a great deal of difference to the facilities we offer to the local community and all who visit the Horticultural Centre in the park and help Blossom to meet their charitable aims.

All volunteering opportunities are paid for by the company, with an amount of £25 per person or a £350 minimum for a day as a benchmark. This cost helps to cover obligations linked to the volunteering which have expenditure attached such as staffing, Public Liability Insurance, equipment, resources, materials, and refreshments for the volunteer event. Planning for each session to offer several different activities designed for all weather eventualities that require adjustments to the Risk Assessments.

Recognising the efforts of the business is important, Blossom provides 'shout outs' over social media. Important too is being open to reciprocal support with Blossom delivering talks to support volunteering programmes at the business's premises on topics such as climate change, sustainability, mental wellbeing, and restorative nature.

On some occasions, ESV has led to other support for Blossom. Local building companies have provided services to repair the glasshouse structure. Another company helped to clear out the drains and gutters around the building as a free service.

Working with businesses has not always been straight forward for Blossom. Delayed payments from companies or a straight refusal to cover some basic costs. Consideration of ability and managing expectations is important too, managing the group throughout including those taking part who are too keen!

Despite this, Blossom remains positive about the value of ESV to them and is looking to develop new ways to stay in touch with businesses who have taken part via development of a newsletter for corporate groups to showcase their achievements.

Top tips for offering ESV:

- Have a few projects up your sleeve to offer a business - sometimes there will be people that can't do things due to a health condition, or have a great skill set you can tap into.
- Plan your offer: Agree start and finish time before. Consider where volunteers will park their cars, use the toilets, get their lunch etc. Have a sign in sheet to record who has taken part.

- Be open to being involved in other events on the back of the contact. Think long term – a contact you make now might come to fruition in a few years' time.
- You want the volunteers to have a good day and enjoy it! So, make sure that you thank people and recognise that they may have been sitting at a computer in a warm office or home working on a normal working day. Physical, practical work offers quick rewards with before and after pictures to prove it. Getting people motivated, task driven and working together has benefits for their work when they return to the office. They will certainly sleep better too that night!