

Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
SW1A 2AA

26 February 2025

Dear Prime Minister,

### **The case for 35 hours statutory volunteering leave**

We know the 'to-do list' for this government is overwhelming; between financial challenges and a complex national and international picture. We are excited to see the work already commenced in 2024 on a civil society covenant and a national youth strategy and will fully engage in these reviews throughout the coming year, but we know these will take time.

As 2025 begins and plans are laid, we believe there is one key action the government could take now to prepare the nation. Volunteers have always been at the core of effective large-scale response by the third sector. Whether it's a local St John Ambulance unit, a Scout group, a youth club, a food bank, a support network for the local hospital or care home, volunteers not only deliver much of the work but help to make sure it accurately reflects the needs of the communities they live in. Yet the number of people volunteering has fallen to a record low<sup>1</sup> and without more volunteers, these vital local services are at risk, stifled by the lack of their key resource.

For example, we know volunteer-led youth interventions can make a difference in young people's lives fast. At Sea Cadets, we've been able to see a clear positive impact on young people's teamwork, life skills, and communication skills within just six months and girls in Girlguiding are up to 23% more confident than the UK average. Together, we have thousands of young people wanting to join but are held back until we have more volunteers.

So, the first step the government could take at the start of 2025 to unlock more volunteering is to introduce 35 hours per year of paid statutory volunteering leave. This would:

- Massively unlock charities' abilities to make a difference.
- Give employees the breathing space to discover and engage in volunteering, so turning around the decline.
- Empower us all to be a part of our local communities – driving social cohesion.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-202324-annual-publication/community-life-survey-202324-volunteering-and-charitable-giving#formal-volunteering>

This simple act could also create avenues for funding the sector without further imposition on government finances, for example, supplementing a leave policy with a volunteering levy for those who aren't able to take part. This could be modelled on the apprenticeship levy, which means that broadly speaking, large employers who didn't offer this volunteering leave would instead need to pay into a common pot to help support volunteering across the country. Affordability for smaller businesses could also be addressed through a right to request statutory volunteer leave.

Volunteering leave is already a key part of many workplaces, so legislating for it more widely would help raise that standard of experience for all employees across the country and be a powerful demonstration of the government's commitment to enabling and empowering civil society.

We therefore call for the government to commit now to the introduction of 35 hours per year of paid statutory volunteering leave, potentially combined with a volunteering levy, as part of its wider programme to empower civil society, and succeed in its five core missions.

We kindly request a reply.

Signed,



Martin J Coles CBE  
CEO Sea Cadets



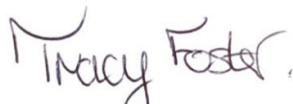
Angela Salt  
CEO Girlguiding



Vicki Sellick MBE  
Chief Experience Officer



Aidan Jones  
CEO The Scouts Association



Tracy Foster  
Chief Guide



Dwayne Fields  
Chief Scout



#### Backing this call:

Alex Easton MP  
Richard Foord MP  
Mary Glendon MP  
Emma Lewell-Buck MP  
John McDonald MP  
Sammy Wilson MP  
Rt Hon the Lord Lingfield

British Exploring Society  
Dogs for Good  
Girls' Brigade  
Royal Albert Docks Trust  
Women's Institute

Dame Mary Richardson

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