



Chelmsford Centre Supporting Voluntary Action (CSVA) and Marks and Spencer (M&S) have things in common. We are both based in the heart of Chelmsford City, value our employees and the local community, but until recently we didn't know that we could work much more closely together and both benefit. CSVA and M&S now have a **working relationship** that maximises opportunities for staff and volunteers to GET and Give in Chelmsford. Here's how:

Giving Employee Time

M&S already have a great scheme; staff are encouraged to volunteer for **a day a year** while on company time. It's known as employee volunteering but here in Chelmsford we call it Giving Employee Time or **GET**, and it's a great way for companies to **Give** to the local community.

Scattergun Approach

The team at M&S Chelmsford are really keen to give time to local good causes but in approaching just nationally branded charities staff weren't able to find enough suitable opportunities. CSVA has an accredited Volunteer Centre which brokers 100s of volunteer opportunities; essentially a local recruitment agency for volunteering. Our Centre Co-ordinator visited the store to talk to staff about the wide **range of activities** and charities they could be connecting with in the local community. M&S said *"We are delighted to have found you!"*

Designing a Bespoke Solution

CSVA and M&S worked up a plan for how to make the best use of M&S employee volunteering. We are in regular contact with over 300 local charities, voluntary and community groups and now provide a monthly poster for M&S staff community board which highlights a wide variety of activities where staff can spend their employee time. We also **broker M&S staff** into local opportunities which best fit their individual interests and time constraints. But that's not all.....

High Street Market

CSVA runs craft groups which are a lifeline to people with support needs. They're a busy bunch and cupboards were groaning with lovely, hand made items which they wanted to sell to raise money for more materials. A market stall on the High Street was booked and we asked M&S if they would like to help. M&S staff were fantastic in **helping to train** CSVA volunteers who at first lacked confidence with the public. It was a great success. Not just for the money made but for the skills learned which CSVA volunteers were able to use again at their next craft stall.

Money Can't Buy

At the craft stall M&S manager said she'd like to help a charity shop with their **window dressing**. There are over a dozen charity shops in Chelmsford, all supporting worthy causes, so we suggested a group training session. CSVA has excellent relationships with local charities and we set to work, chatting through the idea with shops and drumming up interest. On the day 15 charity shop managers attended a unique training event delivered by M&S Visual Merchandising team.

Retail Re-use Recycle

Ever wondered what happens to a **shop mannequin** when it retires from the retail spotlight? M&S mannequins are given to CSVA to be re-homed and cared for in Chelmsford's charity shops!

Come on employers of Chelmsford, support your local community, get in touch today and we will make it easy for you to GET and Give! Call Peter Brooks on 01245 280731.





Heard the buzz?

This is what local people could be saying about your Company:



"It's so exciting to be working with such a major brand that wants to engage with the local community and projects. Your caring approach within the voluntary and community sector is immense – thank you M&S team". Chelmsford Volunteer Centre, craft stall.

M&S unique skill share workshop was reported in the Essex Chronicle and Weekly News:

Peter Brooks, CSVA Charity Engagement Manager: *"It was an opportunity that money could not buy. We were so impressed by the attention to detail M&S put in to this event."*

M&S Chelmsford: *"This was an excellent opportunity to pass on our knowledge and experience to individuals who work in our local community. Our aim was to work together to support the visual presentation and service within their shops, to encourage and increase customer footfall. The store visual team really enjoyed passing their knowledge on to individuals who are involved with such generous and supporting charities, and they found it to be an extremely rewarding process."*

"Our ladies loved this event....." Helen Rollason Cancer Care, on M&S skill share workshop.

"I have heard from my managers that they all thoroughly enjoyed the course yesterday and came away feeling really enthused about what they might do in their own shops now." Farleigh Hospice, on M&S skill share workshop.

GET and Give

Could you give your staff a little bit of paid time off to give to a community project?

Contact **Chelmsford 4 Good** our new charity project that works to encourage local businesses to support local charities with time, resources, equipment and skills.

To find out more visit: www.chelmsford4good.org.uk or call 01245 280731.

