



Challenges  
Worldwide



## Introduction

Challenges Worldwide International Citizen Service (ICS) programme is a great opportunity for young people to gain experience working in a real business. Our programme is backed by the UK Government and we provide professional consultancy training accredited by the Chartered Management Institute (CMI). We pride ourselves on providing safe, successful placements for all of our volunteers.

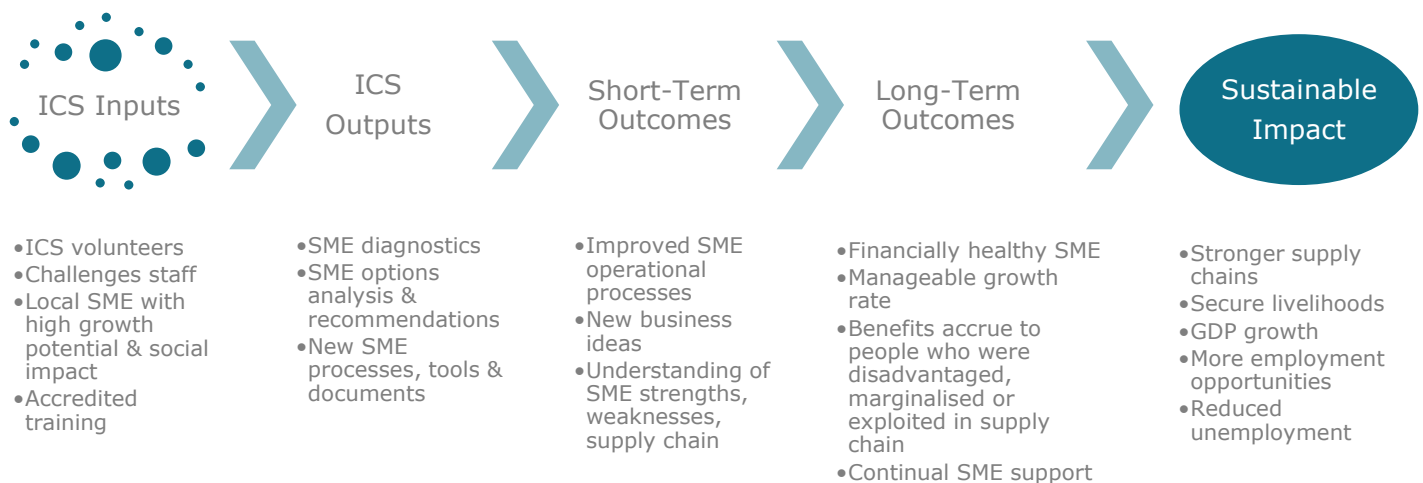
It's natural to have questions and concerns about an ICS volunteer's experience abroad. This document should help answer some of those questions.

## Who are Challenges?

Since 1999 Challenges have worked in over 40 countries across the world supporting people and enterprises to work together to help their community have better access to goods, services and money. Since 2014 we have been focusing our work on Sub-Saharan Africa. With funding from the UK Government, we are working with young people and small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) across Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda and Zambia to help people learn the skills that are needed to improve and grow local businesses and create sustainable economies that promote prosperity for all.

## Theory of Change

There is clear evidence that the best long-term solution to lift people out of poverty is through economic growth by enabling individuals to build their own livelihoods. Our volunteers support local businesses to grow, in turn creating more job opportunities and providing more disposable income to the local community.



## What do volunteers gain from the experience?

Challenges Worldwide helps to provide young people from the UK and emerging economies to gain professional skills and experience to better their futures. Challenges ICS placements provide volunteers with the skills that many employers are looking for.

Our volunteers gain:

- Accredited training from the Chartered Management Institute (CMI)
- Professional business placement with a social impact
- Cross-cultural living and working experience

## Chartered Management Institute Training & Qualifications

Challenges Worldwide is the only ICS programme to provide accredited training to its volunteers from the Chartered Management Institute (CMI). All volunteers are trained in Level 5 Professional Consulting and once they return from placement they have the opportunity to undertake a qualification in Professional Consulting or Management & Leadership. As a strategic partner of CMI, Challenges is able to offer our volunteers CMI qualifications at cost price. CMI is a professional qualification recognised internationally by industries so is a genuine alternative to further studies.

## International Business Placement

A Challenges ICS programme is a totally different experience to school, university or work. Whilst on placement volunteers work alongside a local counterpart offering business analytics and recommendations to enterprises across the agricultural, renewable energy, clean technology and



Challenges  
Worldwide



artisan sectors. Volunteers don't need any previous business experience as they receive comprehensive training accredited by the Chartered Management Institute (CMI).

## Challenges College

Challenges College is an online learning platform that volunteers use throughout their volunteer journey. At the pre-departure stage it is where they access pre-departure preparation information including vaccinations and visas as well as being a central point for policy documents including; Volunteer Insurance Information Document, Code of Conduct, Volunteer Conduct, and Country Risk Assessments and Security Plans. These can be referenced before, during, and after the placement. During the placement volunteers have access to the learning material for the CMI qualification through College. They will also upload their enterprise work on an ongoing basis through College to be reviewed by Team Leaders.

## Personal & Professional Development

Whilst on placement, volunteers will build their confidence, resilience, leadership and business skills, all whilst learning to work in a cross-cultural setting. They will learn how to work and communicate effectively as part of a team and individually and will return as socially active citizens.



## What happens on placement?

### Host Homes

Whilst overseas, volunteers live with host families to help them integrate into their local community. Volunteers share a room with another ICS volunteer of the same gender. The homes that volunteers are placed in are all risk assessed and our host families sign a Host Home Agreement Form which outlines their responsibilities. They are briefed before the volunteers arrive and receive a host home handbook. Overall host homes are a great way for volunteers to feel more settled within their community.



Challenges  
Worldwide



Many of our host families have worked with us since the start of ICS and are part of the Challenges family. Host homes and local volunteers are a key part of the ICS experience and help volunteers build long-lasting friendships that span far beyond their 10-12 week placement.



## Week in the life of a volunteer

Volunteers will work within their enterprises with their local counterpart four days a week. One day of the week they will participate in group training sessions to learn key business skills based around Level 5 CMI Professional Consulting content. We select the enterprises our volunteers work with based on their potential for growth and their high social impact e.g. increasing youth employment, bridging the gender gap, creating more sustainable, environmentally friendly solutions etc.

### Stage 1

Volunteers undertake an enterprise diagnostic to understand the local market, supply chain, organisational structure and strengths and weaknesses

### Week 4/5: Short-term recommendations

Summary of analysis and recommendations made. Steps for implementation are agreed with the enterprise

### Stage 3: Implementation and long-term plan

Recommendations are implemented with the enterprise. Improvements and next steps summarised in a long-term plan.

## Pre-Departure Preparations

### Pre-Departure Coordinators

Once selected, volunteers will be allocated to a country and a Pre-Departure Coordinator. Their Coordinator will guide them through the paperwork and preparations before they go away. This includes help with their visas, vaccinations, health screening and Pre-Placement Training.

## Training

All volunteers undertake three days of training at our Edinburgh Head Office before they go on placement. Sessions include training on cross-cultural working, realities of living and working in an African city and one full day of security training. Once on placement, volunteers have an In-country Orientation Week (ICO) of training with their counterparts. All volunteers receive a city guide written by in-country staff and alumni volunteers, these are available through our website and on College.

### Team Leaders

On top of the three days of volunteer training, our ICS team leaders have an additional two days of management and leadership training before they go on placement. Team Leaders arrive in country a week before their team to settle in and set up plans with their counterparts and in-country staff.



## Fundraising

Volunteers are set an individual fundraising target before they go overseas. This helps prove their commitment to the programme, raises awareness of ICS and develops their personal and professional skills. Volunteers are supported throughout their fundraising by a team of Fundraising Support Officers.

## Health screening & DBS clearance

We see the health of our volunteers as a key priority whilst overseas and will do our utmost to put measures in place to support them on placement. All volunteers must have a DBS clearance and health screening before going on placement. Please encourage volunteers to be honest and open when disclosing any medical issues (physical and psychological), information regarding their history of alcohol and drug use, and anything that will arise as part of their criminal record check. The more information we have about our volunteers, the better we can support them.



Challenges  
Worldwide



## Supporting Volunteers Overseas

### Country Sites

We take every precaution to ensure that everyone who volunteers and works with us can do so safely. We only work in countries where our approach will have a long-lasting impact and where volunteers will be welcomed. We don't work in countries that have been affected by recent conflict. Our country programmes operate in cities – this means that our volunteers are always nearby to the best medical facilities.

In each country, we regularly conduct risk assessments and review our security plans to keep them up to date. We have permanent offices in the countries where we work, with 3-10 members of staff working in each country. Our teams are made up of both nationals and expatriates who all have a wealth of experience supporting ICS volunteers. All of our host homes and businesses are risk assessed before the volunteers arrive and our in-country staff and ICS Team Leaders visit the host homes and businesses regularly throughout the placement.



### Pastoral & Business Support

Volunteers work within teams of approximately 7 UK volunteers, and 7 local volunteers, all of whom are supported by a UK team leader and an in-country team leader. Team leaders and in-country staff are there to offer pastoral support to the volunteers as well as helping them with their businesses. The relationships they build with their host families and in-country volunteers will help them feel more settled in their surroundings.

Volunteers receive business support from our pool of Senior Mentors who offer remote advice.

*Evelyn, whose son went to Rwanda in March 2017, explains how her concerns were resolved;*

*Concern: 'Would he have support when carrying out his responsibilities?'*

*Resolution: 'The network with leaders and mentors clearly answered the question. I did not once hear from my son that he had no one to discuss work matters with and he developed a group of friends within the volunteers that he could spend time with socially. That's important when they are away for so long.'*

## Code of Conduct & Risk Assessments

To keep volunteers safe, all volunteers sign a Code of Conduct and are expected to stick to the rules and curfews we have set for them. The majority of extra activities outside of working hours require a risk assessment which will be reviewed by our staff in-country. Our in-country staff have phones which the volunteers can contact them on 24/7 in the case of an emergency. The risk assessments and plans developed in-country are reviewed by our Director of Operations in our Edinburgh Head Office who is also on call 24/7 for emergencies. Host Homes and businesses are all risk assessed and these are reviewed every cycle.

## Medical Concerns

The most common medical issues for volunteers to face are minor ailments when travelling to a new place – stomach upsets, bites, stings etc. In case anything more serious was to occur, our country teams can contact our Director of Operations in the UK 24 hours a day so incidents can be reported and responded to quickly. We deal with all issues individually and confidentially and decide on the best course of action depending on what's happened and who is involved, always making decisions with a 'safety first' approach. If anything serious happens, a volunteer's emergency contacts will be informed. We ask all volunteers for the contact details of two people who are responsible adults able to take important calls in case of an emergency. Since our placements are based in cities, the best medical facilities are always nearby. We take medical concerns into account when allocating volunteers to specific country sites.

*Evelyn;*

*'My son had been in hospital with a serious nose bleed a month or so before leaving for Rwanda and the matter of him being stopped from going to Ghana, because of concerns of the distance between Kumasi and somewhere he could get a transfusion if necessary, was also quite reassuring. It signalled the organisations concern for the volunteers as individuals.'*

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## Insurance Policies

Volunteers are given insurance information at Pre-Placement Training which explains what is and is not covered by Challenges, including an overview of our insurance schedule. For example, medical costs are covered but money, phones, cameras etc are not covered. In the case of laptops Challenges will cover personal laptops up to £250. If a volunteer chooses to bring a laptop that is more expensive than this we would strongly recommend they take out personal property insurance to cover this. Please note that dual claims cannot be made. We also have a pool of laptops available in each country which volunteers will have access to on a rota basis.



## Keeping in the Loop

### Contact with volunteers

We work in cities so our volunteers will have access to internet for work purposes and to keep in touch. That said, you probably won't have as much contact as you are used to. Volunteers are immersed in a new environment and we recommend that they make the most of their placement, rather than spending too much time distracted by contacting home.

If you need to send an urgent message to your son or daughter and have had trouble getting through to them, you can contact our offices and we will make sure that the message gets through to them. Our number is: 0131 564 1588

*'I think I heard more from Bruce than I did from my other son, who lives 5 minutes away. He was able to call his grandma, who was in hospital during his time away and other family too' - Evelyn*

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Volunteers will also be given a contact information sheet for their relatives at Pre-Placement Training which provides specific details on who family members can contact in an emergency situation.





Challenges  
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## Blogs & Updates

Challenges Worldwide have a dedicated Communications team. You can receive regular updates from the placement on our social media channels and our blog. You can keep up to date with the most recent updates on our website and our social media channels:

Challenges blogs: [Updates](#)  
Facebook: [Challenges Worldwide](#)  
Twitter: [@ChallengesWW](#)  
Instagram: [@challengesworldwide](#)