



Volunteers' experiences

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A view from a volunteer: John McAleer



John McAleer is a Fellow of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries (IFoA) based in Scotland. He specialises in pensions and is a Senior Consultant with Aon. In his day job, he partners with clients to help them achieve their pensions-related objectives.

John began volunteering for the IFoA in 2016.

The experience of a volunteer involved in a pensions working party

I first volunteered with the IFoA in 2016 when I applied to join a working party. The working party was set up to look into how defined benefit pension schemes are maturing and to consider whether there were any gaps in industry practice. I thought this seemed like an interesting area with some overlap in my day job as an actuary advising sponsors and trustees of pension schemes.

Getting involved

I must admit it was quite daunting putting myself forward but that is to be expected when you go outside of your comfort zone.

We had some very experienced actuaries on our working party but I must say they were very welcoming and collaborative. It was also great to exchange views with actuaries who had different backgrounds to me – for example one actuary had worked for The Pensions Regulator and another for bulk annuity providers.

Lifelong learning: benefits

We published our findings in May 2018. Our findings provided the opportunity for me to speak at various industry events – the highlight of which was probably presenting our findings to staff at The Pensions Regulator. The findings also allowed me to contribute to articles for *The Actuary* magazine and *Professional Pensions*. There was a lot of drafting involved in getting the articles just right, including very helpful support from the IFoA. With all the hours invested it was a pleasant surprise that our article on cashflow driven investment made the front cover of the October 2018 edition of *The Actuary*.

...and it led to more opportunities

One of my colleagues at Aon, Alan Watson, is currently an IFoA Council member and the Leader/Chair of the IFoA's Scottish Board. Alan is always on the lookout for speakers to present at the Scottish Board's Knowledge Sharing Scotland (KSS) events, in Scotland. Alan managed to rope me in to do a talk on defined contribution pension



An IFoA Member
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consolidation in 2017. We ran two sessions and managed to generate some insightful sharing of experiences with actuaries from different firms – which Alan tells me is what these events are meant to be all about!

There are lots of volunteering opportunities to suit your areas of interest and the skills that you are looking to develop. It is also a great way to grow your network – both within the actuarial community and within industry more generally. I would certainly encourage members to come forward and volunteer. The benefits far outweigh the time invested.

To get involved in volunteering for the IFoA visit:
www.actuaries.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering-ifo