



I Am a Volunteer and I Do...

Brooke Lewis

What activities have you undertaken as part of your volunteering?

I took on the role of Chair of the, then INCOSE UK, Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Collaboration Group in September 2024. This was originally the only formalised position in the group and involved activities such as planning and scheduling group meetings, communicating with group members and external D&I organisations, and working on and tracking the group's actions to achieve our objectives. As a Collaboration Group, we did numerous activities that helped build our foundations and amplify our presence, including planning and running an "Inclusive Cultures" workshop with the Royal Academy of Engineering at ASEC 2024, re-writing INCOSE UK's D&I policy, meeting with other Professional Engineering Institutions and the Engineering Council to learn from each other's D&I approaches, and speaking at INCOSE UK Advisory Board (UKAB) meetings about group members' personal experiences with D&I. Since then, however, we have grown significantly and became a formalised Committee in March 2025. This means we now have more resources with a committee of seven brilliant individuals, a mailing list of around 50 IfSE Members, and more defined processes, procedures, strategic aims and improved ways of working.



What originally inspired you to volunteer for IfSE?

I began volunteering with INCOSE UK (now IfSE) in 2023, by joining the newly-formed D&I Collaboration Group. At the time, this was a very small group with around five regular attendees to the monthly meetings. Before this, I felt somewhat isolated in the workplace and had done throughout education, because I was surrounded by people I struggled to relate to as a neurodivergent woman. Joining the group was refreshing. I met individuals who felt similarly to me in that they struggled to be their true self because of a particular identifying characteristic, or allies that saw our obstacles and wanted to help remove them. This group allowed me to

share thoughts that I had for so long kept quiet, and to put on lenses that let me view the world from other people's perspectives. When the Chair announced they were stepping away in 2024, I knew this was my chance to apply, but because I was still new to the industry, I worried I lacked experience and that I wasn't loud enough. However, after some kind encouragement from group members and my manager at the time, I put in my application, and I have maintained the role ever since!

What do you get out of volunteering?

One of the main things I get out of volunteering with the IfSE D&I Committee is connections with people that genuinely care. This is not to say that those who don't volunteer aren't passionate; I completely acknowledge and understand that volunteering is time-consuming and isn't always practical, however it often helps to connect with those who are driven by similar values.

Beyond D&I, volunteering with IfSE has had enormous benefits. I have met people from tens of companies across the SE industry, both inside and out of the UK, who I never would have run into otherwise. Being able to build good relationships with other IfSE Members has made me feel much more comfortable going to events like the Annual Systems Engineering Conference (ASEC), because I know I will most likely see a familiar face. However, potentially the most useful thing that has resulted from meeting so many different people is that I have had my eyes opened to the huge variety of opportunities, professional and educational, that are available within SE, as well as the different types of organisations that require Systems Engineers and their different ways of working, company cultures, etc.

Do you have any advice or feedback to offer anyone who is considering volunteering?

I am a big advocate for standing up for what you believe in, so if you're really interested in something and feel like you can make a difference or gain something from it, volunteer. I have volunteered in various ways throughout my life, through being a Young Leader for Girl Guiding, volunteering for charity shops and community groups growing local produce, through STEM outreach in schools and getting involved in initiatives like the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and National Citizen Service, and I have never once regretted it. Each one of these experiences has taught me new skills, particularly confidence, which was a huge obstacle for me growing up. Overall, I'd say if you're considering volunteering, just do it. But be sure to reach out for support and slow down when you need to because as much as you want to make all the change in the world, there are only so many hours in a day, and there are plenty of other like-minded people who can take the reins whilst you pour back into your own cup.