

Cross-Party Group on Volunteering

Thursday 23rd January 2025, 1.00 – 2.00 pm

Minute

Apologies

David Maxwell, Volunteer Glasgow
Sue Bowen, Dyslexia Scotland
Lorraine Moir, EDVA

Present

MSPs

Foyso Choudhury MSP
Jeremy Balfour MSP

Invited guests

Martin Christie, Dunnikier Park Community Golf
Sarah Boath, CHEX
David McDonald, Creative Lives
Gemma Campbell, Scottish Government
Ruth Hutton, Scottish Government
Eliza Twaddle, on behalf of David Torrance MSP

Non-MSP Group Members

Sarah Latto, Volunteer Scotland
Rosie Wylie, Volunteer Scotland
Bethany Sikes, Volunteer Scotland
Debbie Maltman, Volunteer Scotland
Alan Stevenson, Volunteer Scotland
Scott Coyne, Epilepsy Connections
Sarah Cleary, Volunteer Edinburgh
Lesley Giudici, Cruse Scotland
Heather Robertson, Maidsafe Foundation
Susan Hunter, befriending Networks
Bryony Hudson, Community Leisure UK
Tracey Passway, NHS Tayside
Beth Cowen, CVS Falkirk
Helen Fleming, Prostate Scotland
Valerie Ewan, NHS Tayside
David Kelly, Community Transport Association

Kirstin Worsley, Breastfeeding Network
Emma Christie, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action
Sunny Vaughn-Snowball, RNLI
Andrew Ainsworth, Vintage Vibes
Kiera Russell, Rowan Alba
Sarah Duckmanton, Lifecare Edinburgh
Alex Murrie, Victim Support Scotland
Ashleigh Burt, CVS Falkirk
Liz Green, YouthLink Scotland
Gillian Kay, VASA
Fiona Harvey, CHAS
Arianna Patterson, Speech Language Communication Company
Margarita Sweeney-Baird, Inclusive Skating
Fraser Clark, YouthLink Scotland
Jason Henderson, SCVO
Mike Melvin, ACVO
Gregor Muir, Scottish Sports Association
Kirstin White, Victim Support Scotland
Ruth Hall, Scottish Cycling
Elizabeth Wigelsworth, Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland
Abi Clarke, TSI Moray
Kelsa McDonald, Voiceability
Louise Henderson, Girlguiding Scotland
Luthien Lark, Highland TSI
Ann Wilson, TACT
Martha Rodger, The Machan Trust
Chris Ringland, Evangelical Alliance

Apologies

Agenda item 1: Welcome, Introduction, and Minutes of Previous Meeting

Foyso Choudhury MSP (FC), Co-convenor, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the Cross-Party Group on Volunteering.

FC then asked for approval for the minutes from the 31st October Meeting.

Susan Hunter approved and Mike Melvin seconded.

Agenda item 2: Volunteering in Crisis Presentation

FC introduced the agenda item and reflected on the worrying decline in volunteering as a result of the cost of living crisis and stated his commitment to take action to address this if required.

FC then handed over to Sarah Latto (SL) to introduce the first speaker. SL introduced Debbie Maltman (DM), Research Officer at Volunteer Scotland.

DM shared a PowerPoint presentation detailing findings from the 2023 Scottish Household Survey volunteering questions:

- Formal adult volunteer participation has declined from 31% in 2010 to 18% in 2023
- Females have highest participation, 16-34 year olds have lowest participation, and there is more volunteering in rural areas
- Volunteering in organisations/groups focused on local community or neighbourhood is the most popular type of volunteering, with 28% of adult volunteers participating
- Volunteering for groups associated with hobbies and recreation has dropped from 15% in 2022 to 9% in 2023.
- Volunteering in groups focused on community/neighbourhood is highest amongst over 60s, women, white: other British, Disabled, those in SIMD Q2 areas and in remote rural areas.
- These figures are reflective of a reality where people and organisations are struggling as a result of the cost of living crisis

Agenda item 3: Volunteering in Empowered Communities

SL thanked DM for her input and introduced 3 speakers for this agenda item.

Sarah Boath, CHEX

- SB shared that she is here from the Community Health Exchange (CHEX) which is funded by Public Health Scotland to promote community development approaches to health inequalities.
- SB started by reflecting on what we mean by Empowered Community – in Community Empowerment Act, it is about helping communities to do more for themselves and have more say in decisions which affect them.
- SB then reflected on the principles of the Volunteer Charter and how they relate to community empowerment
- SB then questioned how much activity labelled as ‘empowerment’ is actually based on choice or is sustainably funded to adequately support volunteers.
- SB shared quote from a strategic partner – ‘In a time of limited resources, our biggest resource is our people’ – and reflected that they need to be treated with kindness, respect and compassion.
- SB shared a real life example of Getting Better Together in Shotts – they provide a range of services in the community, involving many volunteers.
- They face a range of challenges recruiting and retaining volunteers, except in the community radio station where volunteers learn a range of skills.

- They have a befriending project and a volunteer driver programme – both struggle to recruit volunteers and have bureaucratic challenges to overcome. Many volunteers are retired, so the increase in retirement age is a challenge.
- Deprivation and poor transport links in a rural area are also a challenge
- They are currently looking to engage local businesses and develop an employer supported volunteering offer.
- SB closed by reflecting again on the Community Empowerment Act, and that we are now applying those principles in a different world.

Martin Christie (MC), Dunnikier Park Community Golf

- MC reflected that his experience reflects the words of Walt Disney – if you can dream it, you can do it.
- The Dunnikier Park Community Golf charity was established in 2021 and has seven trustees
- four key objectives:
 - Healthier lifestyles
 - Building esteem and confidence
 - Community engagement
 - Pathway to golf
- Great support from the Fife Golf Trust, as well as support from Fife Active Schools
- Park Golf as a game originated in Japan in 1983 – Dunnikier are the first to bring it to the UK
- It's simple and safe – one club and one ball – and you don't need any technical skills so it's accessible
- They receive financial support from the Community Health and Wellbeing Fund and Our Minds Matter
- MC displayed a list of all the 22 community groups engaged in Park Golf, and 1500 games played, which demonstrates the breadth of engagement, and the positive feedback they receive from those who play.
- MC highlighted the particular impact of their engagement with ten care homes, enabling residents to get out of their care home. MC showed a video to demonstrate this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7gYjNmaEyw>
- MC concluded by saying he hoped people enjoyed the video and said that the achievement of getting the care home residents out playing golf is something he is very proud of.

David McDonald (DMc), Creative Lives

- DMc started by explaining that he wanted to shine a light on local volunteering in communities that helps to empower and enrich local communities through creative activity.

- there are about 10,000 local groups across Scotland who have about a million members involved in creative pursuits.
- around 5% of all of Scotland's volunteers do so in culture and heritage organisations - represent people coming together to share joy and connection and creativity
- Just before Christmas the Scottish Government published the results of their cultural engagement in Scotland report
- Creative Lives support organisations like Sewing2gether All Nations in Paisley through their micro grant scheme to find innovative ways to support local creativity
- A survey from 2022 says that people are feeling more optimistic about the future of creativity and culture than they were at any time since the pandemic – 2023 report getting published soon.
- Creative Scotland has a range of resources on its website – to support the 'Superpower Sector' in Scotland
- Volunteers are leading the process of strengthening community bonds, fostering more vibrant places for people to live, whether that's through knitting circles or community theatre trips or local bands, creative groups really excel in building trust and friendship.
- DMc showcased an art installation in Kirkcudbright – a volunteer-led trail which started small and now has over 100 venues filled with artworks by more than 200 participants
- DMc reflected on the health and wellbeing benefits of creativity, particularly volunteering in creative activities
- Example of OH!CON in the Hebrides – winner of last year's Creative Lives Award – volunteer organised and run sci-fi, fantasy, comic, and games convention which has been held for the last three years in Stornoway – focus on inclusion
- Barriers – government needs to cut bureaucracy and red tape for creative volunteer groups and protect community and cultural spaces that groups need.
- No formal voice for culture in community planning processes – culture needs a seat at the table to preserve local cultural assets
- DMc finished with the offer to contact him for more information.

SL thanked all speakers.

Agenda item 4: Questions and Reflections

SL invited attendees to share any questions or reflections

- Jeremy Balfour MSP asked all speakers and attendees 'What would be the one change that could be identified to encourage more people into volunteering, particularly the 18 to 34 age group?'

- SL shared work being undertaken through the Policy Champions Network to encourage volunteering to be better reflected in the curriculum, including a meeting with Scottish Government and Education Scotland representatives last week.
- Margarita Sweeney-Baird (MS-B) highlighted the National Entitlement Card as an under-utilised resource which could prove disability much more easily for travel, as well as allowing volunteers to accompany disabled people to various activities.
- Susan Hunter (SH) highlighted the importance of Employer Supported Volunteering to help more working age people to volunteer from their first job right through to retirement age
- SL highlighted that developing a National Approach to ESV is a priority for Volunteer Scotland at present, and that an event on this theme is being hosted at the SCVO Gathering.
- Luthien Lark (LL) suggested that we establish a central portal for reimbursing travel expenses for volunteers
- MS-B – reflected that the National Entitlement card shows we already have a lot of joined up processes in place to support volunteering

SL thanked all attendees for their contribution

Agenda item 5: AOB and Close

FC shared that the next meeting will be on the 20th March, 1-2pm, and that SL will recirculate the registration link shortly.

FC shared that all presentations will also be sent out with the minutes.

FC thanked attendees and closed the meeting.