

Cross-Party Group on Volunteering

Thursday 31st October 2024, 1.00 – 2.00 pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Foysol Choudhury MSP

Jeremy Balfour MSP

Invited guests

Ruth Hutton, Scottish Government

Gemma Campbell, Scottish Government

Lesley Hinds, Scottish Parliament

Non-MSP Group Members

Sarah Latto, Volunteer Scotland

Margaret Starkie, Volunteer Scotland

Debbie Maltman, Volunteer Scotland

Alan Stevenson, Volunteer Scotland

Alex Murrie, Victim Support Scotland

Alasdair Ross, ACVO

Diane Wilson, Impact Funding Partners

David Maxwell, Volunteer Glasgow

Chris Ringland, Evangelical Alliance Scotland

Kelsa McDonald, Voiceability

Helen Fleming, Consultant

Amanda Simpson, University of the West of Scotland

Emma Christie, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action

Abi Clarke, TSI Moray

Kirstin White, Victim Support Scotland

Laura Leslie, Impact Funding Partners

Louise Henderson, Girl Guiding Scotland

Liz Green, Youthlink Scotland

Martha Rodger, The Machan Trust

Tracey Brown, Marie Curie

Susan Hunter, Befriending Networks

Sarah Van Putten, Lifecare Edinburgh

Sue Bowen, Dyslexia Scotland

Scott Coyne, Epilepsy Connections

Fiona Harvey, CHAS

Mike Melvin, ACVO

Lara Henderson, Community Transport Association
Dayna MacLellan, Impact Funding Partners
Luthien Lark, Highland TSI
Gillian Kay, Voluntary Action South Ayrshire
Ruth Hall, Scottish Cycling
Georgia Artus, Vintage Vibes
Margarita Sweeney-Baird, Inclusive Skating
Kiera Russell, Rowan Alba
Fraser Clark, Volunteering Matters

Apologies

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

Jeremy Balfour MSP (JB), Co-convenor, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the Cross-Party Group on Volunteering. He also added that this is the AGM of the CPG.

JB then asked for approval for the minutes from the 27th March meeting.

Foysol Choudhury approved and Alan Stevenson seconded.

Agenda item 2: AGM

Sarah Latto (SL), secretariat for the CPG explained the purpose of the AGM was to elect office bearers. Membership has already been ascertained in the annual CPG membership form and survey. We now have 62 non-MSP members and 6 MSP members

Both co-convenors, Jeremy Balfour MSP and Foysol Choudhury MSP confirmed they wish to stand again for the position of co-convenors.

SL asked for a proposer and seconder for each.

Jeremy Balfour:
Proposer: Foysol Choudhury
Secunder: Alan Stevenson

Foysol Choudhury:
Proposer: Susan Hunter
Secunder: Jeremy Balfour

SL further confirmed that Volunteer Scotland would remain as secretariat of the CPG.

JB put on record his thanks to SL and Volunteer Scotland for their ongoing support of the CPG.

Agenda item 3: PVG Fees Proposal

JB stated that the CPG had been an active voice in raising concerns about the PVG fee proposals and invited SL to provide an update on the PVG Fees proposal.

SL shared that the Scottish Government and Disclosure Scotland had launched a consultation in March with a range of proposals related to PVG fees and discounts, including the proposal to replace the fee waiver for volunteers in QVOs with a fee discount.

She shared that Volunteer Scotland had responded to the consultation in May with views from across the sector. She also shared that the CPG had sent an open letter to the Minister for Children Young People and Keeping the Promise about the proposal, signed by many members of the CPG.

SL stated that a group of CPG members met with the Minister on the 19th September. Attendees were:

- Sarah Murray from RVS
- Susan Hunter from Befriending Networks
- Mike Melvin from ACVO
- Fiona Harvey from CHAS
- Martha Rodger from the Machan Trust
- Liz Wigelsworth from CHSS

The meeting went well and all attendees gave succinct and impactful accounts of the potential impact of the proposal. The Minister stated that she had heard the concerns, she did not want to negatively impact volunteer participation and would have the decision by October or November.

SL confirmed that it has since been confirmed that the decision is now likely to be made in early 2025.

David Maxwell (DM) asked if there was an opportunity to bolster our concerns further using the Scottish Household Survey data which shows that the voluntary roles affected by the PVG fee proposals are those in greatest decline already.

SL confirmed that those findings were already reflected in communications with the Minister but confirmed that Volunteer Scotland could reinforce that point in future communications.

Mike Melvin (MM) provided his reflections in the meeting with the Minister, including the power examples shared by the representatives present, particularly the example provided by Fiona at CHAS of a child who smiled for the first time after an interaction with a volunteer. He also reflected that the delay to the decision is a sign that the Minister is taking time over her decision. MM further reflected on the current situation with Edinburgh Integrated Joint Board proposals to cut third sector funding as an example of the challenges already facing the 3rd sector.

Susan Hunter (SH) stated that they had the opportunity to influence the Equalities Minister on this issue recently and reinforced the importance of making the case to other ministers when possible. SL confirmed that representatives from Volunteer Scotland are meeting the Equalities Minister on the 7th November and will raise this issue.

JB thanked SL for her input.

Agenda item 4: Scottish Household Survey Further Analysis

JB welcomed Debbie Maltman (DM) to the meeting and invited her to start her presentation.

DM shared PowerPoint slides detailing recently published analysis of the 2022 Scottish Household Survey. The key points of the presentation were:

- Formal volunteering participation has decreased from 26% in 2019 to 22% in 2022, and that informal volunteering participation has remained static at 36%.
- There has been a decline in the number of hours volunteered formally from 149.9 to 122.1 – a decline of 27.8 million
- There has also been a decline in the number of hours volunteered informally from 211 million to 178 million – a decline of 33 million hours
- The economic value of formal volunteering has declined from £2.25 billion to £2.15 billion
- The economic value of informal volunteering has declined from £3.17 billion to £3.14 billion
- The total economic value of volunteering is therefore £2.3 billion – a decline in value of £132 million
- These figures are greatly skewed by wage inflation – if the hours contributed in 2022 were valued at the 2018 wage levels, the decrease to the economic value of volunteering would be £914 million.
- DM shared that Volunteer Scotland will be sharing further analysis of the SHS 2022 data in the coming months, including time series analysis, cross-sectional analysis and a refresh of the 'Who Contributes Most to Scottish Volunteering' data.
- DM further shared that the Volunteer Scotland sponsored PhD, 'What we Do Together: Exploring Volunteering Using the Concept of Associational Life' will be published soon with several events planned in the coming months.
- Finally, Debbie confirmed that Volunteer Scotland are currently working with an external partner on some work to ascertain the wider social value of volunteering which goes beyond the replacement cost approach.

JB thanked Debbie and asked representatives from Volunteer Scotland how this data is planned to be shared with the Scottish Government.

AS confirmed that the Third Sector Unit have sight of this research

DM stated that any new research data is fed into the government through consultation responses and briefings.

JB asked if this data will be shared with COSLA, and SL confirmed the plan to develop a policy briefing on this data and will include COSLA on the distribution list.

AS shared more information about the Social Value research currently being undertaken at Volunteer Scotland which will have a focus on wellbeing.

DM asked if the social value research will be comparable with research undertaken into the Glasgow Commonwealth Games legacy and AS confirmed it would adopt the same methodology.

Agenda item 5: Volunteer Charter Influence into Action

JB welcomed Mike Melvin and Alasdair Ross from ACVO, Aberdeen's Third Sector Interface, to talk about their successful work in promoting the Volunteer Charter in Aberdeen.

Mike Melvin shared a PowerPoint presentation and shared the following key points:

- The Volunteer Charter was refreshed in 2023 and the new Charter Champion element was introduced which has had a huge impact with over 250 organisations signed up.
- ACVO have used the refreshed Charter to successfully engage with public bodies in Aberdeen and confirmed that it opened the door for conversations.
- NHS Grampian became the first health board in Scotland to sign up as a Charter Champion – they have over 500 volunteers, not counting volunteers in other organisations that support the NHS.
- The 10 principles are really practical and user friendly and the pledge provides the opportunity for more meaningful commitment, particularly with current discussions around budgets and cost cutting. It is also useful for volunteer recruitment.
- Becoming a Charter Champion means that you become part of a wider community of practice supported by Volunteer Scotland.

Alasdair Ross (AR) further added that they influenced public sector partners in Aberdeen to become Charter Champions through 'relentlessly' bringing up the Volunteer Charter in meetings as a solution to a number of issues, and ensuring it was minuted in meetings. AR also stated that you have to be ready to 'pounce' when opportunities present themselves, such as an audit of Aberdeen City Council volunteering

So far NHS Grampian, Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeen Community Planning have all pledged. They are now working with the Health and Social Care Partnership

and North East Scotland College. AR stated that it has been a really worthwhile exercise for volunteers in Aberdeen.

JB thanked Mike and Alasdair.

Agenda item 6: National Volunteer Recruitment Campaign

JB Welcomed Margaret Starkie (MS) to share an update on the National Recruitment Campaign.

MS shared a PowerPoint presentation and her key points were:

- That this campaign was developed as a result of evidence that volunteer recruitment was becoming more challenging and that formal volunteering had declined.
- MS reinforced that this is not a Volunteer Scotland campaign and that it has been developed and launched in partnership with arrange of organisations. Under the Volunteering Action Plan banner.
- That the first phase of the campaign was launched in September with a range of resources for volunteer involving organisations on the themes of 'inspire', 'support', and 'recruit'.
- Resources include guidance, case studies and links to events and training.
- The next phase of the recruitment campaign aimed at volunteers will be launched on the 5th of December, International Volunteers Day.

AS asked how this sits with other campaigns, for example Befriending Week.

SH confirmed that she was a member of the group developing the campaign and said that it has been great to work with others and develop a campaign that belongs to with wider partners of the Action Plan. She also stated that the recruitment campaign has been used by Befriending Networks and fed into the Befriending Week campaign.

MS stated that the campaign was developed expressly so that it could be adapted into or complement other campaigns, including Volunteers' Week and Big Help Out.

Agenda Item 7: Thanks and Close

JB shared that the next meeting will be on the 23rd of January and that SL will recirculate the registration link shortly.

SL shared that Volunteer Scotland had published a statement following the UK Government budget on their website.

MM shared that next week includes Befriending Week, Trustees Week and International Volunteer managers Day which are all important for highlighting volunteering.

JB concluding the meeting at 1.55 and wished everybody a good Christmas when it comes.