BECOMING A VOLUNTEER-READY ORGANISATION IN SCOTLAND

A practical guide with self-assessment questions

THIRD SECTOR
Dumfries and Galloway

2025
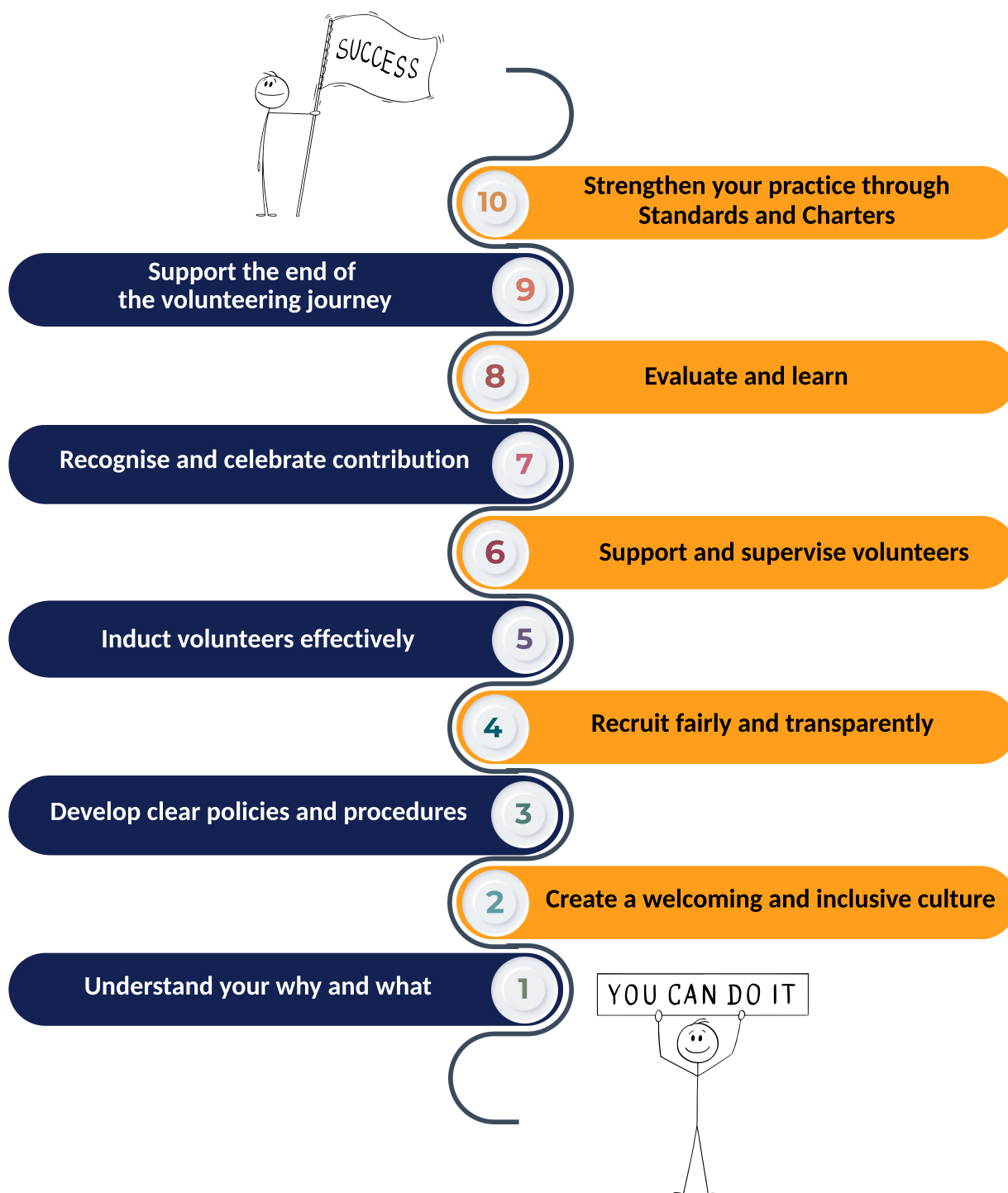
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10-steps roadmap to becoming a volunteer-ready organisation

Volunteers bring energy, skills, and heart to communities across Dumfries and Galloway. To attract, support, and retain volunteers, organisations must be "volunteer-ready" which means, prepared with the right structures, culture, and support systems.

Follow the step-by-step roadmap below, from the bottom to the top, to embrace each area you need to focus on to achieve better success in volunteering.

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YOU CAN DO IT

THIRD SECTOR
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STEP 1. Understand your why and what

- Clarify your purpose for involving volunteers.
- Define and design volunteer roles: Be specific about tasks, skills required, time commitments, and how roles complement paid staff.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Involve paid staff, board members, and volunteers in discussions about the design and purpose of volunteer roles — this builds shared ownership and clarity.
2. Define why you involve volunteers and how they contribute to your mission.
3. Identify and describe specific volunteer roles.
4. Clearly outline the skills, qualities, and attributes needed for each role (e.g., communication, empathy, tech literacy, reliability).
5. Ensure volunteer roles complement (not replace) paid staff and add unique value.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Have our staff, board, and existing volunteers been involved in shaping volunteer roles?
2. Why do we want volunteers in our organisation?
3. What specific roles can volunteers take on?
4. What skills, qualities, or experience do these roles require?
5. Are we clear about which skills are essential vs. desirable?
6. How do these volunteer roles complement the work of paid staff, rather than replace them?
7. Are these roles meaningful, clearly defined, and aligned with our mission?

STEP 2. Create a welcoming and inclusive culture

- Embrace Scotland's values of equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Promote a culture of respect, openness, and appreciation.
- Ensure your opportunities are accessible to all (including people with disabilities, different backgrounds, or additional support needs).

KEY ACTIONS

1. Foster an inclusive, respectful, and open environment where everyone feels they belong.
2. Remove barriers to participation wherever possible.
3. Offer flexibility in volunteer roles in terms of time, tasks, location, and commitment, to meet different needs and lifestyles.
4. Make reasonable adjustments to support individual volunteers.
5. Promote inclusive language and representation across your materials and spaces.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Do we actively welcome people from diverse backgrounds?
2. Are our roles accessible to people with disabilities or additional support needs?
3. Do we offer flexible options for volunteering (e.g., remote, short-term, different time slots)?
4. How do we ensure volunteers feel included, respected, and supported?
5. Are our communications and materials inclusive and accessible?

*This section is supported by the Inclusive Volunteering Checklist, a practical tool to help you reflect, plan, and take action.

STEP 3. Develop clear policies and procedures

- Establish a strong foundation by developing clear and inclusive policies.
- Policies should reflect organisation's values and help create a safe, consistent, and supportive environment for everyone.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Develop clear, supportive policies and procedures that cover all aspects of volunteering.
2. Regularly review and update your policies to ensure they remain relevant and accessible to all involved.
3. Ensure policies reflect your organisation's values and responsibilities, including areas like safeguarding, health and safety, inclusion, and data protection.
4. Include volunteers in relevant organisational procedures (e.g. risk management, complaints).
5. Make sure volunteers are covered by insurance, including public liability and any relevant protection while carrying out their role.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Do we have clear and accessible policies that help guide what we do?
2. Are our policies regularly reviewed and communicated effectively to staff, board members, and volunteers?
3. How do we incorporate feedback to improve these procedures?
4. Are volunteers included in our wider organisational procedures where relevant?
5. Are volunteers adequately protected and insured while volunteering?

*This section is supported by the Policy Guidance.

STEP 4. Recruit fairly and transparently

- Use welcoming language and diverse channels to promote roles
- Keep recruitment simple with basic application and checks
- Ensure clarity with a clear Volunteer Agreement
- Provide a warm, supportive induction

KEY ACTIONS

1. Use inclusive and welcoming language in all volunteer recruitment materials.
2. Promote volunteer roles widely through different channels (e.g., your website, social media, TSDG platform (regionally), Volunteer Scotland (nationally), and local networks).
3. Use a simple and proportionate application process, such as an expression of interest or basic form, suitable for the role.
4. Have a friendly, informal chat with applicants to understand their motivations, interests, and experience.
5. Where needed, request references for roles involving trust or work with vulnerable individuals.
6. Conduct PVG checks only when appropriate, following Disclosure Scotland guidance.
7. Provide a clear Volunteer Agreement
8. to set out expectations for both the volunteer and the organisation, ensuring mutual understanding and clarity.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Does the organisation use inclusive language and accessible formats in recruitment materials?
2. Are volunteer opportunities promoted in places where a diverse range of people will see them?
3. Is the application process proportionate to the role, especially for low-risk or short-term volunteering?
4. Are conversations with potential volunteers welcoming and focused on getting to know them?
5. Are references or PVG checks used only when necessary, and in line with national guidance?
6. Does the organisation provide a Volunteer Agreement that sets clear expectations for both parties?

STEP 5. Induct volunteers effectively

- Provide a warm and structured welcome to volunteers.
- Help volunteers settle by encouraging questions and offer ongoing support.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Provide a warm, structured induction that covers an introduction to key people, policies, values, and expectations.
2. Make space for questions and settling in.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Do we have a clear and welcoming induction process?
2. Are volunteers introduced to the team, environment, and how things work?
3. Do they know who to go to for help or support?

*This section is supported by the Induction Checklist.

STEP 6. Support and supervise volunteers

- Assign a dedicated person or team to support volunteers on their journey.
- Provide training and check ins to ensure they feel confident and valued.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Appoint a named person or team responsible for day-to-day volunteer support and communication.
2. Provide role-specific training, including any policies, procedures, or skills needed to carry out tasks safely and effectively.
3. Set up regular one-to-one or group check-ins to offer feedback, answer questions, and make sure volunteers feel appreciated and supported.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Is there a clearly identified person or team that volunteers can go to for support or questions?
2. Do volunteers receive the training they need to feel confident and carry out their roles safely?
3. How often do we check in with volunteers, and do they feel heard, valued, and supported?

STEP 7. Recognise and celebrate contribution

- Regularly show appreciation.
- Publicly celebrate volunteer achievements.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Regularly thank volunteers in personal and meaningful ways.
2. Celebrate volunteer contributions through team shout-outs, newsletters, social media, or events.
3. Take part in national celebrations like Volunteers' Week and Trustees' Week to spotlight their impact.
4. Offer formal recognition opportunities, such as the Saltire Awards for young people (12–25).
5. Encourage volunteers to reflect on and share their contributions to help build pride and motivation.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Does the organisation regularly thank volunteers in ways that feel personal and meaningful to them?
2. Are we actively sharing and celebrating volunteer contributions through our communication channels and events?
3. Do we participate in national recognition events like Volunteers' Week and Trustees' Week?
4. Are volunteers, especially young people, supported to access formal recognition like the Saltire Awards?
5. Do we create space for volunteers to reflect on and share the impact of their involvement?

- The Saltire Awards: saltireawards.scot/
- Duke of Edinburgh Award: www.dofe.org/

STEP 8. Evaluate and learn

- Measure volunteers' impact.
- Use insights to improve your volunteering offer.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Collect feedback and data to understand the difference volunteers are making.
2. Involve volunteers in reflecting on their impact through stories, surveys, or informal conversations.
3. Use what you learn to improve volunteer roles, support, and overall experience.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Are we actively collecting feedback or data to understand the impact of our volunteers?
2. Do we give volunteers opportunities to reflect on and share the difference they make?
3. Are we using what we learn from feedback to improve their experience and strengthen our approach?

STEP 9. Support the end of the volunteering journey

- Make sure there's a clear and respectful process in place when a volunteer finishes their role.
- Take time to thank them, gather feedback, and leave the door open for future involvement if appropriate.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Plan for how volunteers will leave or complete their role, whether short or long term.
2. Offer a chance to reflect on their experience and provide feedback.
3. Acknowledge their contribution and thank them, formally or informally.
4. Keep the door open for future involvement, if appropriate.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Do we have a clear and respectful process for when a volunteer finishes their role?
2. Are we capturing feedback from volunteers when they leave to help us improve?
3. Do we take the time to recognise their contribution and say thank you?

STEP 10. Strengthen your practice through Standards and Charters
- Use recognised frameworks to show your commitment to good practice and volunteer well-being - it builds trust and helps attract volunteers.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Promote your commitment to volunteer rights by signing up to the Volunteer Charter on the Volunteer Scotland website.
2. Explore Investing in Volunteers to assess and improve your volunteer programme.
3. Use public recognition of your standards to attract and reassure potential volunteers.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Are we using any recognised quality standards to strengthen our volunteer programme?
2. How do we communicate our commitment to valuing and supporting volunteers?
3. Could aligning with a charter or award help raise awareness and trust in our work?

KEEP UP TO DATE WITH LEGISLATION AND GOOD PRACTICE

- **Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway: <u>Welcome to Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway</u>**

- **Volunteer Scotland: <u>Home - Volunteer Scotland</u>**

- **Volunteer Charter: <u>Become a Charter Champion - Volunteer Scotland</u>**

- **Investing in Volunteers the UK Quality Standard: <u>Investing in Volunteers - Volunteer Scotland</u>**

- **Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO): <u>Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations</u>**

- **Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Service (VSDS): <u>Disclosure Services - Volunteer Scotland</u>**

- **<u>The Saltire Awards</u>**

- **<u>Duke of Edinburgh Award</u>**