



THIRD SECTOR
Dumfries and Galloway

Volunteering Strategy

2023 – 2026



VOLUNTEER
Dumfries and Galloway

**“Making Dumfries and Galloway
a great place to Volunteer”**

Working together to put our sector first
Dumfries and Galloway's Third Sector Interface

Volunteer Dumfries and Galloway is part of Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway the operating name of Dumfries and Galloway Third Sector Interface. Scottish Charity Number SC043832

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway is a third sector interface¹ and exists to:

- be a central source of knowledge about the third sector locally
- ensure a strong third sector voice at a strategic level within local planning structures and nationally
- develop the capacity of volunteering, community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprise to achieve positive change
- provide leadership, vision and co-ordination to the local third sector to better respond to local priorities, including through partnership and collaboration.

Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway's aim in relation to volunteering is:

To inspire a diverse, accessible and meaningful range of volunteering opportunities and increase levels of volunteer participation amongst people of all ages and backgrounds across the region.²

1.2 Why have a volunteering strategy?

Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway first introduced a volunteering strategy in January 2020, which was updated in October 2020 to reflect the effect of the Covid19 pandemic.

The 2023-26 volunteering strategy will document how Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway can develop and support volunteering across the region. The strategy will:

- promote a culture of valuing volunteering and volunteers
- encourage and share best practice in supporting volunteers
- increase skills levels of those supporting and managing volunteers
- acknowledge the impact of volunteering on local communities.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/third-sector/third-sector-interfaces/>

² <https://www.tsdg.org.uk/>

The strategy has been developed with the assistance of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations across Dumfries and Galloway. The action plan, developed from the strategy, documents the practical ways in which Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway will achieve the strategy's objectives.

1.3 National frameworks

As a third sector interface Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway must support the outcomes of various national frameworks and these are reflected in the strategic objectives of this volunteering strategy.

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Volunteering Outcomes

- third sector interfaces will play an important role in promoting and supporting volunteering at a local level, including through the ongoing delivery and promotion of Saltire Awards.

Volunteering For All (Scottish Government, April 2019)^{3 4}

Third sector interfaces should:

- promote the value of volunteering for all principles and approaches, celebrating the contributions already being made and encouraging everyone who wants to take part
- provide practical guidance and support on “Volunteering for All”.

Volunteering involving organisations should:

- adopt the principles of “Volunteering for All” in volunteer practice, reviewing their existing processes and guidelines
- consider ongoing opportunities to measure the impact of their work, on volunteering, beneficiaries, staff and the wider community
- build links with and across communities, seeking opportunities to share resources and expertise
- prepare for future volunteer recruitment, being mindful of the changing contexts in which they operate.

³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/volunteering-national-framework/>

⁴ <https://volunteeringactionplan.co.uk/>

2 What is volunteering?

2.1 Definition

Volunteering can be defined as an activity:

- you undertake of your own free will, not something you are told to do
- not done for financial gain i.e. not a job, you cannot be paid, however, you can receive appropriate out of pocket expenses
- done for the benefit of community, society or an individual.

Volunteers are not a replacement for paid staff nor a means of providing activities which should be delivered by statutory bodies.

The act of volunteering can be split into three areas:

- neighbourliness
- informal volunteering
- formal volunteering

Neighbourliness could be cutting someone's grass, getting some shopping or babysitting for a friend.

Informal volunteering is more ad-hoc, for example baking cakes for a local coffee morning or donating to a local charity shop.

This strategy is aimed at formal volunteering, where an individual undertakes a role with a designated group, organisation or charity.

2.2 Benefits

There are many benefits gained from volunteering including:

- meeting new people
- feeling you are "part of something"
- learning new skills, developing existing skills or passing skills to others
- improving job prospects or applications for further education
- improving mental health, self-esteem or self-confidence
- supporting your local community or an organisation you are interested in
- feeling you are making a difference.

The benefits volunteers bring to organisations include:

- the ability to deliver more or new services
- having more community involvement
- able to grow the organisation
- more people to promote the work and services of the organisation.

3 Volunteering in Dumfries and Galloway

3.1 Background

Since the 2020 volunteering strategy was developed, our region has experienced, and volunteers have responded to, the Covid19 pandemic. Volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations were pivotal in supporting the region’s local communities throughout this time. Roles for both organisations and individuals have developed over the last three years and statistically more people have volunteered, particularly, in relation to crisis, ad-hoc and informal volunteering activities.^{5 6 7}

To help establish the current “state of volunteering” across the region and to inform this strategy, Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway has used a variety of methods to gather information:

- October 2021 online survey of volunteer-involving organisations (121 responses)
- September/October 2022 online survey of individual volunteers (296 responses with volunteers representing 220 different organisations)
- August – October 2022 individual meetings with organisations
- December 2022 focus groups with organisational representatives
- October 2022 – January 2023 focus groups with volunteers representing a variety of different organisations.

From discussions with both volunteers and organisations, Covid19 is no longer seen as a major issue. However, the knock-on effect of the pandemic is organisations have seen a fluctuation in volunteer numbers – an increase

⁵ <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/research-evaluation/research-publications/covid-19-mutual-aid-volunteering-in-scotland/>

⁶ <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/research-evaluation/research-publications/impact-of-covid-19-on-scotlands-charities/>

⁷ <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/research-evaluation/research-publications/the-road-to-recovery/>

during the first lock down which has fallen away as people have returned to “normal” life. Some organisations noted that some of their pre-pandemic volunteers have not returned to volunteering. A small number of people indicated that there are still some volunteers who are reticent to meet in large groups or to be in close contact with other people.

Volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations are now stepping in to support local communities during the cost-of-living crisis.⁸ Again, third sector organisations are adapting to the needs of both their volunteers and communities.

3.2 Themes

From the research carried out the main volunteering themes which have emerged are:

Recruitment

- Organisations are having difficulty in recruiting new volunteers.
- Volunteers are often not “volunteer ready”, have a lack of understanding around volunteering and require more support than organisations can offer.
- Individuals want paid employment or work experience as opposed to volunteering.
- Volunteers find it difficult to find suitable volunteering opportunities and often don’t know where to look for volunteer adverts. Volunteers have identified that although online adverts work well, these are not accessible to everyone.
- Individuals are concerned that volunteering will affect their benefits.

Staffing/resources

- Organisations identified lack of capacity to support volunteers properly.
- Ensuring volunteers and staff have clearly identified roles with no overlap.
- Drop in income due to the financial crisis may lead to organisations reducing staff and may not be able to support volunteering.

Cost-of-living

⁸ <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Testing-our-Resilience-The-impact-of-the-cost-of-living-crisis-on-volunteering-and-volunteers.pdf>

- Both organisations and volunteers are concerned about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on services. Organisations may want to provide additional services but have lack of funds to do this.
- Concern that volunteer involving organisations may be expected to fill gaps if the public/private sector are unable to provide services.
- Increase in volunteer expense claims and/or volunteers being unable to afford to volunteer.
- Impact on volunteers mental health and wellbeing.

Governance

- Organisations have difficulty in recruiting appropriate trustees. There is a need for “lived experience” trustees for organisations.
- Trustees having a lack of understanding as to what the role they are undertaking involves.
- Trustees not receiving adequate induction and support for the role.
- Some organisations identified they have long term trustees providing continuity but not the turn-over required to bring fresh eyes to the organisation.
- Trustees not understanding that they are volunteers and organisations not recognising this either.

Organisational needs

- Organisations lack knowledge in policies/procedures around safeguarding.
- It was noted that some volunteers are technology averse and not interested in learning to use digital devices. People may be missing out by not accessing information digitally.

Our region

- Rural communities with several organisations in one locality all recruiting volunteers but insufficient people in the area to support them all.
- Lack of good public transport is hindering organisations and volunteers.
- The digital exclusion research carried out by Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway highlighted that residents, including volunteers, may be digitally excluded through lack of motivation, lack of skills, poor connectivity or poor access to appropriate devices.^{9 10}

⁹ <https://www.tsdg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/220928-TSDG-Digital-Exclusion-2022-v1.1.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.tsdg.org.uk/digital-exclusion/>

4 Strategic objectives

The identified themes are the basis for the following strategic objectives.

4.1 Objective 1

To promote volunteering and its benefits to residents across the region.

The value of volunteering needs to be recognised by individuals and organisations.

Conclusions

- Everyone should be able to be a volunteer.
- The old-fashioned perception of volunteering and volunteers should be challenged and organisations should promote a more modern image of volunteering.
- Opportunities for those who have not volunteered before to learn about volunteering, its benefits and how to find a suitable role should be developed.
- Methods of recruiting volunteers from a variety of backgrounds including those who are new to Scotland or whose first language is not English should be established.
- Volunteers and volunteering should be celebrated, especially during Volunteers' Week¹¹.

4.2 Objective 2

To promote a wide variety of flexible and inclusive volunteering opportunities.

Organisations need to attract new volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds.

Conclusions

- Organisations should identify clear volunteering roles and the skills (if any) volunteers may need to undertake them.
- A variety of methods should be used to promote volunteering roles.
- Organisations should consider enabling young people (under 25s) to volunteer and explore appropriate methods of recruitment and support.

¹¹ <https://volunteersweek.org/>

- Organisations should consider how they can support volunteers with additional needs including learning disabilities, physical disability and mental health issues.

4.3 Objective 3

To encourage volunteer-involving organisations to recognise the benefits of supporting volunteers.

By providing good support to volunteers organisations are more likely to retain their volunteers. It is recognised that many prospective volunteers are not ready to step straight into volunteering roles and may require additional support.

Conclusions

- Organisations should have clear processes to support their volunteers and these should be known to everyone.
- Volunteers should have a designated person to support them whilst volunteering (a staff member or another volunteer).
- Organisations should have strong welcome and induction processes in place to make new volunteers feel wanted and ensure that they understand the role they are undertaking.
- Good channels of communication between volunteers and their organisations should be encouraged. The methods of communication used should suit individual volunteers and organisations.
- Organisations should recognise and celebrate volunteers and volunteering.
- Good working relationships should be fostered between volunteers and staff within organisations.
- Organisations should recognise the benefit of providing appropriate training to volunteers for the roles they undertake.
- Recognition should be given to the benefits of volunteers completing various awards e.g. Saltire¹², Duke of Edinburgh¹³.

4.4 Objective 4

To promote and encourage volunteering amongst young people under 25.

¹² <https://saltireawards.scot/>

¹³ <https://www.dofe.org/dofewithadifference/activities/volunteering/>

In order that organisations have longevity it is essential that younger people are recruited as volunteers. The benefits of volunteering should be promoted to those under 25.

Conclusions

- Schools, further education and youth organisations should encourage young people to undertake volunteering.
- The benefits of volunteering should be highlighted to younger people.
- Volunteer-involving organisations need to recognise the benefits of having younger volunteers.
- Saltire Awards should be promoted both to young people and to volunteer involving organisations across the region.
- The benefits of Saltire Awards and how the system works should be promoted to teaching staff and volunteer managers/co-ordinators to ensure they can support young people through the award.

4.5 Objective 5

To develop strong boards and trustees by providing support and promoting good practice to organisations.

For a strong third sector it is essential that organisations have strong governing bodies.

Conclusions

- The role of trustees and the importance of them to organisations should be promoted.
- Organisations should have clear recruitment processes in place for trustees in line with their governing documents¹⁴.
- Organisations should review their governing documents to ensure they are still fit for purpose in relation to the recruitment, support and training of trustees.
- Organisations should have clear support mechanisms in place for new trustees. The opportunity to undertake appropriate trustee training should be available to governing body members.
- Regular skills audits of trustees will help organisations ensure that the members of their governing body meet the needs of the organisation¹⁵.

¹⁴ <https://scvo.scot/support/running-your-organisation/governance/recruitment-induction>

¹⁵ <https://scvo.scot/support/running-your-organisation/governance/developing-board>

- Organisations should ensure good relationships between their trustees, staff and volunteers.
- The recruitment of young trustees (under 30) should be encouraged.

4.6 Objective 6

To promote best practice in volunteering amongst volunteer-involving organisations across the region.

When volunteers are well supported, and organisations are well run volunteering can be hugely beneficial to everyone. Sharing best practice and discussing volunteering situations with other like-minded people can be of great benefit to volunteer co-ordinators/managers. Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway should be the conduit to promote best practice and to ensure that up to date information on volunteering is shared with organisations across the region.

Conclusions

- Volunteer-involving organisations should have clear definitions of what roles volunteers undertake and what jobs staff do. Volunteers are not cheap labour and should enhance the work done by/services provided by the organisation.
- Quality standards such as the Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway Volunteer Charter¹⁶, Volunteer Friendly Award¹⁷ and Investing in Volunteers¹⁸ should be promoted by Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway as a means of organisations demonstrating they value and support their volunteers.
- Networking opportunities for volunteer co-ordinators/managers should be available to promote and share good practice.
- Organisations should consider “sharing” volunteers, this may be particularly relevant in rural areas.
- Appropriate training in volunteer support should be available via. Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway to all volunteer involving organisations across the region¹⁹.

¹⁶ <https://www.tsdg.org.uk/volunteering/volunteering-charter/>

¹⁷ <https://volunteerfriendly.co.uk/>

¹⁸ <https://investinginvolunteers.co.uk/>

¹⁹ https://www.tsdg.org.uk/events/?post_type=events&s=&event_location=&event_type=tsdg&month=

4.7 Objective 7

To promote volunteering as part of the pathway to employment and clarify the difference between volunteering and work experience.

Job applicants are often required to demonstrate previous experience when applying for jobs, however, this can be difficult if people have been out of work for some time or have not worked before. Organisations have identified that often prospective volunteers are actually looking for work experience.

Conclusions

- A clear explanation and understanding of the terms volunteering and work experience is required.
- The benefits of volunteering when seeking employment should be promoted.
- Employers should understand that individuals may gain skills through their volunteering which could be beneficial to their company.
- Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway should promote the benefits of volunteering as part of the employability pathway²⁰.

4.8 Objective 8

To develop Volunteer Dumfries and Galloway as a brand of Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway and the “go to” place for volunteering both for volunteers and organisations.

It is important to the development of volunteering across the region that Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway (and Volunteer Dumfries and Galloway) is the recognised place to ask for help and support both as a volunteer and volunteer- involving organisation.

Conclusions

- Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway needs to promote the support and help it offers organisations through its Volunteer Dumfries and Galloway brand.
- Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway should promote its Volunteering Charter to organisations across the region.²¹
- Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway should continue to provide training opportunities for organisations.

²⁰ <https://www.tsdg.org.uk/employability/>

²¹ <https://www.tsdg.org.uk/volunteering/volunteering-charter/>

- Individuals should be made aware of the support available from Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway to help them find a suitable volunteering opportunity.
- Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway should use a variety of methods to engage with both organisations and the general public.

4.9 Objective 9

To maintain Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway as the co-ordinating organisation for crisis volunteering.

It is clear the current cost-of-living crisis will have an impact on volunteering and that Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway will provide support to organisations during this time. Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway recognises that should a future crisis (e.g. flooding, health, severe weather, pandemic) occur it may be necessary to recruit and manage crisis volunteers.

Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway should be the main point of contact for public sector partners, volunteer-involving organisations and volunteers during times of crisis.

Conclusions

- Good links should be maintained with Dumfries and Galloway Council and NHS Dumfries and Galloway to support crisis volunteering.
- Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway will continue to support the local authority to maintain and develop resilience groups across the region who respond at times of need.
- Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway will support volunteer-involving organisations providing information and best practice guidance during times of crisis.

5 Conclusion

Volunteering is alive and well across Dumfries and Galloway. Our research and engagement with organisations and volunteers has helped inform the development of the specific objectives within this strategy to further develop and support volunteering across the region. The objectives include how Third

Sector Dumfries and Galloway can provide support to both organisations and individual volunteers.

To compliment the volunteering strategy, using information supplied by both volunteers and organisations an action plan has been developed. The action plan will be a live document, which will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis and presented to the trustees of Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway annually.

The volunteering strategy will be reviewed at least every three years or sooner should legislation or a change in relevant frameworks require implementation.