The VOLUNTEER BUZZ

Issue One



VOLUNTEER
Dumfries and Galloway

Hold the date for VNF's first meeting

The first Volunteer Network Forum (VNF) of the year will be taking place online on Thursday 25th April 2024.

The VNF is an online platform for you by you.

Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway coordinates the VNF by linking you all together through the exchange of experiences, skills, practice and information sharing.

We want to hear your views on what topics interest you: Click below to go to survey: www.tfaforms.com/5109982

Save the date in your calendar for the VNF on Thursday 25th April.

Celebrating the heart of our organisations - your wonderful volunteers

Welcome to the first edition of Volunteer Buzz, where we shine a spotlight on the incredible individuals who make our organisations thrive - our dedicated volunteers.

In the heart of every third sector organisation lies a team of volunteers and, without them, many organisations would simply cease to exist.

In this edition, Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway (TSDG) shares your stories and top tips on appreciating and recognising the outstanding contributions of volunteers.

Discover the quality standards available to enhance and elevate your volunteer programme, ensuring a rewarding experience for both your organisation and those who generously give of their time.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our community, selflessly contributing their time and energy to make a positive impact. Where would we be without them?

Join us in a great big heartfelt thank you to our wonderful volunteers. Stay tuned for more inspiring stories, tips, and updates in the upcoming quarterly editions of Volunteer Buzz. Together, we continue to build a stronger, more connected volunteer community.

Quality Standards in volunteering



Achieving a Quality Standard demonstrates to current and potential volunteers how much they are valued and provides them with confidence in an organisation's capacity to provide an exceptional volunteer experience. Here are some of the types of quality standards available to organisations:

1.Volunteer Charter - The Volunteer Charter outlines ten fundamental principles that serve to establish effective relationships in volunteering.
www.volunteerscotland.net/volunteer-practice/quality-standards/volunteer-charter

2. Volunteer Friendly Award - A quality standard for volunteer programmes in Scotland, the Volunteer Friendly Award is targeted at small to medium-sized volunteer organisations.
www.volunteerscotland.net/volunteer-practice/quality-standards/volunteer-friendly

3. Investing in Volunteers - Investing in Volunteers (IiV) is a UK Quality Standard that assists you in assessing and improving the quality of your volunteer management and involvement, demonstrating and improving the efficacy of your volunteer activity, and enhancing your organisation's reputation.
www.volunteerscotland.net/volunteer-practice/quality-standards/investing-in-volunteers

Nominate your volunteers

Applications are now open for the Scottish Charity Awards 2024 to celebrate organisations and individuals that have had a particularly special year.

All types of voluntary organisations and groups, including registered charities, social enterprises, campaigning groups, community interest companies and people involved in those spaces can apply.

Categories include Volunteer of the Year (for someone who has demonstrated great dedication to a cause) and Trustee of the Year (for a board member who really excels). Applications are open until 12pm on Friday 15th March.
scvo.scot/scottish-charity-awards/apply



Volunteer top tips



To recognise

1. Communication Support: Set up regular meetings to discuss successes and challenges. You can do this formally or informally such as regular debriefs at the end of the shift, or a catch up over a coffee. Doing this lets the volunteer know you are listening and taking their views seriously.

2. Training and Skill Development: Offer training opportunities or workshops that help volunteers enhance their skills or gain new ones. Demonstrating an investment in volunteers personal and professional growth reinforces their value to your organisation.

3. Paying Volunteer Expenses: No volunteer should be out of pocket when they give of their time freely. Reimburse them with any reasonable expenses incurred while volunteering. Enable volunteers on low income or with little spare cash to volunteer without financial barriers.

4. Know their Motivation: Explore what motivates your volunteers. Engage with them to capture this information, be open to feedback. Be creative when designing your role descriptions.

5. Problem-Solving: Think about how volunteers can be involved in changes in your organisation and how they can actively participate in decision-making. Volunteers may see things from different perspectives.

To appreciate

1. Recognition: Establish a formal recognition programme that acknowledges volunteers for their dedication, time, and contributions. Use various communication channels such as newsletters, social media, or the organisation's website to spotlight on volunteers and their achievements.

2. Volunteer Appreciation Events: Organise special events or activities to celebrate volunteers, such as volunteer dinners and award ceremonies. Provide certificates, plaques, trophies or small tokens of appreciation during these events.

3. Personalised Thank You Notes: Write personalised thank you notes expressing your thanks and appreciation for the specific contributions of each volunteer. Handwritten notes can add a personal touch and show genuine appreciation for their efforts.

4. Avoid Demotivation: Try not to create a sense of 'winners and losers' by singling out volunteers. Provide appreciation to the whole team or parts of the team who volunteer together.

5. Annual Volunteer Appreciation Week/Month: Designate a specific week or month to celebrate volunteers, during which various appreciation activities and initiatives can take place. Use this time to showcase achievements, express gratitude, and reinforce the importance of their contributions.

Your stories

SHAX



Volunteering at SHAX supports individuals from various backgrounds to boost their employability skills and confidence in the workplace. Over the past year, 15 SHAX volunteers age 14 to 25 received a Saltire Award, and seven volunteers age 25 plus received a SHAX Volunteer Award to recognise their achievements.

One of our youngest volunteers, Finlay started volunteering at SHAX in September 2023. Finlay has recently been successful in obtaining part time employment at a local convenience store – we would like to congratulate him on achieving this outcome so quickly after starting volunteering.

Finlay is keen to join the Fire Service when he turns 18, so SHAX arranged a visit for him at the Dumfries Station to meet the team and have a tour.

Finlay has gained employability skills such as customer service and working as part of a team to enhance his CV and personal development. Finlay has recently achieved a Saltire Award for 50 hours and is working hard towards his next milestone. Well done, and thanks for your continued support.

Last year, we welcomed back former volunteer Grant, who previously volunteered at SHAX whilst at school and university. After finishing his studies in Computer Animation Arts, he returned to SHAX to continue developing customer service skills and gaining retail experience. Grant is now looking for employment in the Computer Animation industry and is working part time whilst applying for jobs in the field. Throughout his time at SHAX, Grant achieved a Saltire Award for 150 hours. Well done Grant, and thanks for your support.

In September 2023, SHAX received the Investing in Volunteers' Award to recognise the value and importance of our volunteers and our volunteer management practices. This recognition, presented by Kateryna, Volunteering Officer from Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway, pictured above, stands as a testament to the remarkable efforts of our volunteers and the impact they have had on our community. We celebrated by holding a coffee morning with the team, enjoying delicious cakes and coffee.

Testimonials from SHAX volunteers who took part in the accreditation process:

"I enjoy getting out the house and keeping myself busy. I enjoy meeting new people and it has also helped with my social skills and skills in the workplace."

"It's good company and I enjoy being part of something valuable after retiring."

"I enjoy being part of the team, people laugh sometimes when I say it, but we are like a family here and I enjoy being a part of that."

"I've made real friends here and it is the highlight of my week to come along and help out."

Your stories

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY BEFRIENDING PROJECT

with Elaine Graham



What attracted you to become a Befriender?
I had volunteered at Home-Start Wigtownshire for five years working with 0-3 year olds and wanted to expand my knowledge and experience working with older children. The Befriending role fitted the criteria perfectly (8-18 year olds).

How does Befriending benefit the individual?
Befriending gives a young person the skills to help them tackle difficulties either at home, school or in the wider community before they get too big through extra support in helping them become the best version of themselves. This is achieved through listening, problem-solving and confidence building which are acquired through learning and doing new activities together.

How are Befrienders and young people matched?
After you complete your training, you and the young person will have a meeting to see if you are a 'match'. I always remember being told 'don't take it personally if it isn't a match' which eases nerves and takes the pressure off to allow the meeting to be relaxed because the young person will probably be as nervous as you.

You just need one thing to spark a conversation and a light bulb moment and we bonded over 'competitiveness' as I had a sporting background and this ped his interest as he was also 'competitive' (little did he know, golf wasn't my sport, but he did find out later, hence I became the trusty caddy).

What do you get from being a Befriender?
Not all children have the best start in life, but by giving your time it is one of the most valuable things that you can do for a young person because you are creating memories that they will cherish for a lifetime. We often have a laugh when we reminisce about past activities together. Through doing activities together, you are also showing them the opportunities that life has to offer and a future that is bright and where they can fulfill their full potential, because all they need is one person to believe in them.

However, don't expect change to happen overnight. It takes time to build trust and there will be bumps in the road but if you are patient, calm and ever present and even if it's not always visible you are making more of an impact than you think. The greatest reward being a Befriender is when your young person sees you and their face lights up with the biggest smile. It's in that moment that you know you are making a difference.

Your stories

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY HARD OF HEARING GROUP



The volunteers of Dumfries and Galloway Hard of Hearing Group find fulfilment in restoring more than just hearing aids—they mend the threads of connection for individuals grappling with hearing loss. With over 20 plus drop-in clinics each month throughout Dumfries and Galloway, the group's core mission is to provide free maintenance and repairs for NHS hearing aids.

Most volunteers have a personal connection to hearing loss, providing a mosaic of expertise and understanding.

One, Jon Joy, said: "Four years ago, having just turned 60, and being forced to semi-retire for health reasons, I unexpectedly found myself with that rare precious commodity – time. After visiting my local Hard of Hearing Group drop-in to get a tube for a hearing aid, and chatting to the volunteer, I signed up to volunteer myself. I have had hearing related issues since birth and now wear a BAHA (bone anchored hearing aid), so I am well acquainted with hearing loss. It's clear how valuable the service is. For someone with a faulty aid to come frustrated to a drop-in clinic, to then go out with a smile on their face for the sake of a new tube – priceless."

David is a regular user of the Hard of Hearing Group's services. He recounts how the volunteers not only fixed his hearing aid but also offered a listening ear.

"It's not just about the technical stuff; it's the human connection. They genuinely care," he said with gratitude.

Peer support amongst the volunteers is important. Jon said: "Working alongside someone with years of experience has been invaluable. It's like a hands-on classroom where I learn not just about hearing aids but also about empathy and understanding."

In Jon's area, Rena McLeary help set up the group and has volunteered continuously since.

Rena said: "I wear hearing aids myself and have done for about 40 years, so I know what it means to have a hearing problem. When I heard about the group hoping to start, I knew I wanted to be a part.

"Nearly 16 years later, I am still loving every minute. It is so satisfying to see someone go out with a smile simply because you have retubed their aid. Sometimes people have questions and because of my experience I can say – 'I know your problem, and this is how I cope'.

"It's a great group, doing a necessary job and I would say to anyone who has the time and is looking to volunteer for something, come and join us - you won't regret it."

Volunteers like Jon and Rena exemplify the transformative power of empathy and collective action and their contribution to improving the quality of life for those with a hearing loss and strengthening their local communities is deeply valued and appreciated.



UPDATES

Don't forget to register for the webinar 'Attracting and Retaining Volunteers' from Dumfries and Galloway Community Food Network.

The speakers are our own Claire Brown, Head of Operations at Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway, and Hazel Thompson, Manager at Kate's Kitchen.

The network are hosting the webinar on Wednesday 21st February at 10am - 11am. There will be a discussion on best practice and top tips on attracting and retaining volunteers.

It will be held on Zoom with a short presentation from each speaker and plenty of time for questions and supporting each other.

www.tickettailor.com/events/propagate/1131315

Resettlement Project Board

The Welcome, Orientation and Support Workstream of the region's Resettlement Project Board has arranged a session on 'Resettlement and Cultural Adjustment' on Thursday 21st March at The Bridge, Cuckoo Bridge, in Dumfries.

This workshop, which follows very positive feedback from the recent International Office of Migration training on Afghanistan, will explore the process for those in resettlement schemes.

It is targeted (initially) at staff and volunteers working with those in resettlement programmes across Dumfries and Galloway, Staff/partners and volunteers can sign up by email at Resettlementproject@dumgal.gov.uk.

The VOLUNTEER BUZZ

We want to invite volunteer involving organisations to be part of future issues. We want to hear from you, sharing your news and showcasing the remarkable impact that volunteers have on your work. Whether it's an achievement, a touching story, or a unique perspective, we welcome your contributions. This is your platform, so let's shine a spotlight on the incredible efforts of your volunteers.

How to Get Involved:
Please get in touch with us at volunteering@tsdg.org.uk, and let us know about the amazing work your organisation and volunteers are doing.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY CHAMBER

Parents are being given help to open the door towards paid employment.

DG Chamber in partnership with the region's Local Employability and Skills Partnership are offering parents on income-based support the chance to develop new skills and knowledge. Click below to discover more:

Health and Social Care leaflet

Step Into Employment leaflet