

Scottish Volunteering Forum

Summary Report

Thematic Discussion: Coronavirus and Volunteering

Date: 30th April 2020

Attendees: Rachel Le Noan, SCVO; George Thomson, Volunteer Scotland; Jen Reston, Aberlour; Margaret Starkie, Volunteer Scotland; Louise McGinty, Quarriers; Morven Maclean, CHAS; Paul Okroj, CHSS; Paul Wilson, Volunteer Edinburgh; Carol Carbine; Lorraine Toner, Glasgow Life; Caroline McKenna, Social Good Connect; David Maxwell, Volunteer Glasgow; Lisa Taylor, Healthcare Improvement Scotland; Matthew Linning, Volunteer Scotland; Laura White, Sustrans

Sarah started the meeting with a brief overview of the survey – details in separate summary document.

1. Adapting to the lockdown and adapting volunteer roles

Organisations on the call provided an update on how they were adapting to the lockdown and adapting volunteer roles. Majority of organisations have ceased their face to face volunteer roles and, befriending and mentoring services have moved to telephone and virtual support if possible. There have been new roles developed such as, virtual storytelling, developing micro volunteering offers and recording activities for service users to take part in at home.

Volunteers have been helping with practical tasks, driving, delivering shopping and moving PPE within their communities. Some organisations who are still providing practical support have asked volunteers who are in shielded groups to cease volunteering. Organisations have been overwhelmed with the numbers of people who have come forward to volunteer. One organisation reflected that they faced some backlash when they halted volunteering and felt pressure to find roles for volunteers.

There was a reflection by several participants that they are focussing on keeping existing volunteers engaged, and have not advertised new roles externally.

Lisa Taylor from Healthcare Improvement Scotland said that NHS Scotland had about 6000 volunteers prior to the coronavirus lockdown, and currently has approximately 2300 currently active. They are not recruiting new volunteers in the majority of health boards.

2. Volunteer Manager Wellbeing

Respondents reported that many of their teams are absorbing the trauma and stress of volunteers and service users, which is having a negative impact on their own wellbeing. As such, managers are providing more regular support virtually, and signposting to telephone counselling services. Virtual coffee breaks are also being used widely to support colleagues.

One person reflected that working from home can be challenging, but another saw the positive in not having to commute to work every day.

Would a regular Skype/Zoom call for SVF members to catch up and share issues be helpful?

3. Volunteers' Week

Volunteer Scotland have adapted the campaign to make it simple and to say thanks to volunteers. The week will be showcased on Radio V and the Volunteers Week website to promote, and will have more of a focus on social media content. They will be asking people to share thanks to volunteers in a creative way this year, for example through poetry, art or crafts and will be sharing case studies of adaptability and other examples of people sharing their experiences pre and during COVID19. During Volunteer's Week it will be recognising the future need for volunteers.

Attendees reflected that retaining volunteers who are currently inactive is a big concern, and Volunteers' Week is needed more than ever to thank volunteers and encourage them to stay engaged.

4. Coordinated response – national and local

TSI experience – Volunteer Centre Edinburgh have found the impact of the Ready Scotland campaign overwhelmingly challenging. Public response peer to peer has been really great. They have been guiding community groups. Community response has been amazing, they have encouraged this and developed resources.

From the national campaign, 5,000 potential on boarding volunteers. Now down to 1,200 which is a more manageable number. Great innovations and private company support on how to onboard large numbers of people. A lot of the volunteers coming forward are brand new to volunteering, if we don't give them a positive experience, positive that not everyone doesn't need help. Local council issues. Concerns around the future of volunteering.

Volunteer Glasgow – Ready Scotland nationally had 35,000 registered. There is no way to tell how many people have signed up to multiple options. They have been connecting with mutual aid groups too. Glasgow had 4,600 signed up via Volunteer Scotland, Scotland Cares option. The digital platform Kinetic had 1,700 on Volunteer Glasgow, some are conversions and others are direct sign ups. There has been a request for a pause in the recruitment. Concerns raised about one of the contractors of national test centres, recruiting 1,000 to volunteer. A lot of set hours per week and all voluntary contracts. A lot of people finding the mixed messages with the terms of volunteering from the national campaign concerning, for example the call for volunteers and ex NHS staff to sign up.

Sarah raised that this could be a good opportunity to capture the impact of informal contributions, particularly at the local/community level. It may be worth looking at commissioning people to capture this learning at a local level.

Volunteer Scotland added that the Scottish Government, British Red Cross and Scottish Government will be doing the breakdown of this. Motivations and quality information hasn't been captured at this

stage. Report has been done on mutual aid groups, 220 new groups with a 120,000 membership. Expecting the First Minister to announce a pause in in the Ready Scotland Campaign. 75,000 volunteers signed up and 22,000 returning ex health and social care staff. It has been a political response rather than what is needed. Threat and opportunity need to be balanced. Deployment of all won't happen at this stage, but need to partner, and find opportunities for this and others over time. Assessment of quintiles 1 and 2 has identified 10,000 who have signed up on VS. Radio V – set up to contain the group of people who have signed up and communicate messaging.

Welcome of the pausing of the Ready Scotland campaign, conversations about where that came from and issues that will come from the future. Still more research to be done, coordination of communities. Need to try and capture this information.

5. Recovery Planning – ‘the new normal’

Completely changing our volunteer offer. How we involve volunteers and how to add most value. Identify new ways for people to help. Cliff edge of financial issues. Home-based and solo activities instead of groups. Concerns of people who use volunteering to engage socially and meet new people. Some of the evidence NHSGGC survey in terms of social isolation and issue of digital exclusion. Worry about the impact of those with higher support needs and no social interaction for a year. Carol raised the impact of accessibility of people who are deaf or hard of hearing, Ability Net focus on Deaf/ Hard of hearing groups. Volunteer Glasgow highlighted that there had been conversations on how to use set top boxes to enable people with hearing loss to access information to their TV. Lorraine Toner, will circulate this information when ready.

Actions

- Scope the need of peer support for SVF members during this time
- Capturing contribution of volunteers during COVID – hyper local
- Motivations for Scotland Cares campaign – conversations with SG and Third Sector Unit
- Boots recruiting volunteers – what volunteers are and what volunteers are there to do
- Lorraine to circulate information on set top boxes/TV being used for people with hearing loss.