

# Scottish Volunteering Forum

## Volunteering in 2020 and Beyond: Key Asks

### 'Volunteering for All' Outcomes Framework

The 'Volunteering for All' outcomes framework was launched in March 2019, following significant consultation with volunteer involving organisations and infrastructure bodies. Since then there has been little progress in developing a corresponding implementation plan.

The current profile of volunteering as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic presents a significant opportunity to progress volunteering, but we are also experiencing a seismic shift in the volunteering landscape. We need to act now to ensure that the framework informs the optimal combination of policies, programmes, and services to deliver recovery and renewal.

The Volunteering and Communities Circle supporting the Social Renewal Advisory Board, convened by the Scottish government, references the need to 'draw on relevant elements of the Framework', but there is no commitment to develop an implementation plan. There is also a lack of representation for volunteer involving organisations, particularly those who supported the development of the outcomes framework, in this conversation.

***Ask: Given the current profile of volunteering, we ask that the development of a Volunteering for All implementation plan, in consultation with a range of relevant and representative stakeholders, is prioritised by the SRAB and is featured in the programme for government.***

### Spectrum of Volunteering

During the Covid-19 lockdown, it is reported that 13% of adult volunteering was in formal roles, 16% was through mutual aid groups, and 35% was in informal volunteering. (Volunteer Scotland)

This formal/informal dichotomy can, however, be unhelpful. Volunteering is a spectrum of activity, all of which requires specific management expertise and adequate resource to flourish. Leaders of volunteers across the spectrum have much to learn from one another in ensuring that the volunteering is meaningful, inclusive and safe. Covid-19 has also highlighted evidence of increased employer supported volunteering, and blended working presents new opportunities for virtual and in-person participation.

During the Covid-19 response, our members reported a confusing picture for many people wanting to volunteer, and challenges in mobilising volunteers in a safe and meaningful way at the pace required to meet demand. The Scotland Cares volunteering campaign generated significant interest in volunteering, but resource was not provided to volunteer involving organisations to effectively mobilise these individuals in challenging circumstances. Conversely, many TSIs had to reactively provide guidance in volunteer management to many community level responses.

***Ask: That resource to support volunteering recognises the full spectrum of volunteering activity, and additional support is provided for organisations to break down structural barriers to volunteering.***

## Championing Inclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic, and its impact on the economy, has further deepened the inequalities that exist in volunteer participation, making it more difficult for those who are often underrepresented in volunteering to participate. People who are disproportionately affected by the pandemic also face many barriers to participation, including shielding due to health issues, digital exclusion and unclear rules on volunteering for DWP claimants.

2020 also saw the profile of the Black Lives Matter movement rise globally. People of colour are underrepresented in more formal volunteer roles, suggesting that many pathways into volunteering could be systemically racist.

Our members have highlighted the role of volunteering in helping individuals to build confidence, improve mental health and build social connection, and the vital role of personal 'influencers' such as support workers or youth workers to encourage participation. The key role of volunteering in promoting social renewal in underrepresented groups cannot be overlooked.

***Ask: Evidence-based solutions and resource to address policy and structural barriers to participation are built into the implementation plan of the Volunteering for All Outcomes framework.***

## Local Infrastructure

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the leadership role of Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs); supporting vital support services by coordinating activity, connecting people and mobilising community action. Volunteering will be critical to the recovery phase, our response to the effects of recession and our aspirations to build a better future. TSIs are needed to lead that work locally.

SVF members are aware that TSIs deliver a complex, expanding and critical role within tight financial constraints. We believe that effective TSIs are essential to achieving 'Volunteering for All', not only as the local infrastructure for volunteering, also because of their wider strategic remit in supporting strong third sector organisations, public service reform and community participation.

***Ask: That Scottish and Local Government, and other funders, review their investment in Third Sector Interfaces, so that adequate resource is in place to support this vital infrastructure.***

## Voice of Volunteering in Strategy and Policy

Volunteering is experiencing a seismic shift due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the Volunteering for All outcomes framework presents a significant opportunity to build volunteering into national policy.

However, the voluntary sector is facing financial crisis and it is likely that capacity to support volunteering activity will decline without strategic recognition and representation. There is also a real risk, given the current economic situation, that job substitution, coercion and exploitation of volunteers will become more prevalent.

The Scottish Volunteering Forum has provided an objective and representative voice for volunteering at strategic and policy levels in recent years but have limited resource to sufficiently support this. We believe that volunteering needs a more coordinated presence to adequately consult relevant stakeholders and represent its importance for social renewal at a policy and strategy level.

***Ask: That strategic and policy representation of volunteering, based on stakeholder consultation, be acknowledged and resourced specifically in government funding agreements with local and national infrastructure bodies.***