



The Scottish Volunteering Forum response to the Scottish Government's budget for 2022/23.

24 January 2021

Dear Ms Robison

The Scottish Volunteering Forum is profoundly disappointed in the recent Scottish Government budget for 2022/23 and the impact this will have on supporting volunteering in Scotland. The forum fully supports SCVO's recent letter that was sent in December 2021 highlighting the cuts to the Third Sector budget.

During the last two years of the Covid-19 pandemic, Scotland's volunteering response has been remarkable. It is no exaggeration to say that Scotland's volunteers have and continue to be essential in maintaining our country's recovery and resilience. The value of all forms of volunteering, to our communities, the economy and our collective health and wellbeing, is now even better understood than ever before. During the pandemic many services withdrew vital support across communities but through the mobilisation of volunteer involving organisations, infrastructure bodies and mutual aid groups, this vital community support provided a lifeline to people. This included supporting people across Scotland with the effects of poverty, mental health, social isolation, and loneliness, and witnessing in real time further inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic.

Pre-pandemic, the Scottish Government's *Volunteering for All* framework made a robust, positive, evidence-based case for change in April 2019, demonstrating the vital impacts of volunteering across the National Performance Framework.

Despite all this, there has been no Government commitment to any additional investment to deliver the high aspirations for Scotland within the forthcoming *Volunteering for All* action plan, which is due to be launched in June this year or to ensure volunteering is accessible for all.

With no mention of volunteering investment in the recent Scottish Government 22/23 budget and only one mention in September's Programme for Government, this is extremely disappointing and very short sighted. Against this backdrop, there is also a cut to the Third Sector Budget by £800,000. The Third Sector budget funds infrastructure bodies who have already had significant year on year cuts to volunteering delivery, but like all our members are increasingly expected to do more with less.

Volunteers are not a free resource, volunteers deserve the very best experience to retain them, they need our professional support, out of pocket expenses and access to high-quality training to ensure they have a safe and enriching experience throughout their vital contribution. Volunteers are supported by teams of people across the nation and provide billions of pounds to the economy by giving their precious time to our society.

The Scottish Volunteering Forum recognises the financial challenges for Government due to the continuing situation, and the wider fiscal environment within which it must operate. However, it is essential for the future health and wellbeing of the nation that Government matches it's understanding of the transformational power and impact of volunteering and its recognition of people's outstanding contributions. This can be achieved by moving across all Government departments and portfolios to identify the appropriate resources and policy interventions required to achieve its national framework vision, ambitions, and outcomes.

Anything less, will devalue the immense contribution of the hundreds of thousands of people volunteering, the people that support them in increasingly burnt-out public and third sector organisations and those of us that face systemic barriers to realising our rights to participate.

The Scottish Volunteering Forum will continue to offer their time and expertise alongside many others on a voluntary basis and, on behalf of their members and networks, to work with Government to identify and develop proposals to finalise the *Volunteering for All* framework action plan by the end of June 2022. We hope that departments across Government will make a similar commitment and ensure vital funding is provided.

We look forward to hearing from you.

The Scottish Volunteering Forum