



# Volunteering Strategy 2023–2026



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## Introduction

From the commitment of volunteering effort in support of the completion of Dalmuir Park in the early 1900's, through the creation of Mutual Service Associations in the 1930s, and latterly the introduction of the Scotland-wide Volunteer Centre network in the mid 1990's, West Dunbartonshire has a long-standing reputation as a giving authority.

Volunteering is a continuum of social activity, all of which embeds reciprocity. Formal volunteering supports service delivery, activism and advocacy, mutual aid and personal development. Informal volunteering builds strong social support networks, engages group membership, nurtures inclusive communities and enables everyone to contribute. It is an activity that involves the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of others, society, community or the environment and can take many forms. Volunteering is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain. It is distinct from mandated, required or contractual unpaid activity. This definition includes those who give their time as voluntary members of committees and boards of trustees in the Third Sector and lay members of partnerships and other agency boards.

Volunteering is, by its nature, an evolving and developing series of activities, proactively supporting services, organisations and communities and reactively, strengthening responses in times of emergency and crisis. Research by Volunteer Scotland suggests that over the course of the pandemic, 74% of people in Scotland either informally or formally supported fellow citizens through volunteering.<sup>1</sup>

This Volunteering Strategy, informed by and complementary to the Scottish Government Volunteering Action<sup>2</sup> Plan, intends to demonstrate the Community Planning wide commitment to the importance of volunteering in West Dunbartonshire. It expands beyond the conventional notion of volunteering as a third sector activity and looks to embrace the wider volunteering sector across the authority area, providing a framework for individual volunteers, volunteer involving organisations and agencies, alike. By doing so, it places volunteering as a crucial component in all service delivery, community involvement and empowerment practice.

As Community Planning partners, we are committed to the ongoing development of a vibrant volunteering sector, recognising the contribution volunteering makes to the life of West Dunbartonshire, and the added value it brings to public services.

## National and Local Context

### National Context

The Scottish Government's Volunteering for All national framework<sup>3</sup> (published in April 2019) set out a coherent and compelling narrative for volunteering, defining the key outcomes desired for volunteering in

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-organisations/research-and-evaluation/publications/covid-19-research/impact-of-covid-19-on-volunteering-participation-in-scotland/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-volunteering-action-plan/documents/>

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

Scotland over the next ten years to enable informed debate and decision about the optimal combination of programmes, investments and interventions.

Development of the framework took account of a wide evidence base and suggested that:

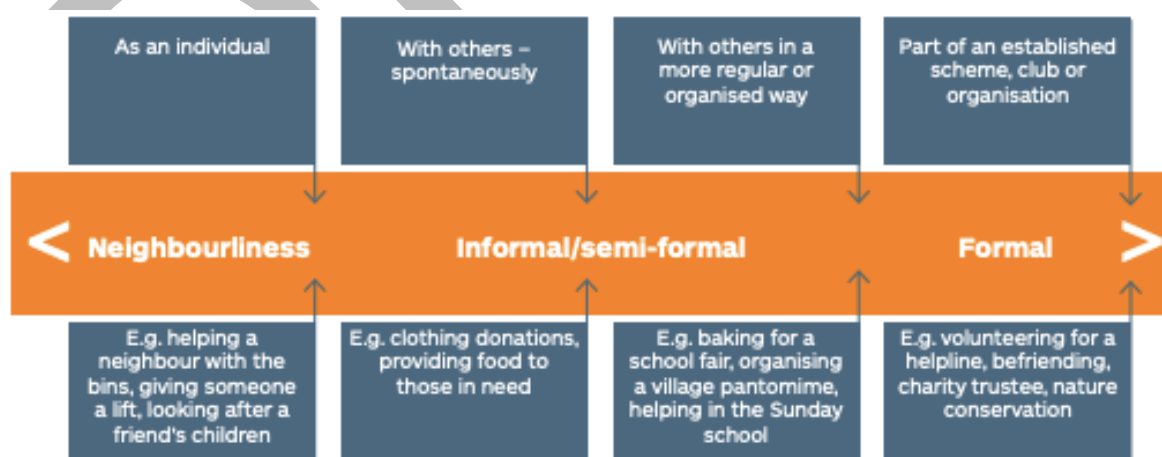
- Disadvantaged groups are under-represented in volunteering due to their exclusion from formal volunteering opportunities
- There is a heavy reliance on a 'civic core' of highly engaged individuals who provide the majority of volunteering hours in Scotland
- There is evidence emerging from the pre-retiral age group (45 – 59 years) of a decline in formal volunteering participation rates over the period 2007 – 2017.

Consequently, the national framework supporting volunteering development and the resulting action plan builds on six key good-practice principles, ensuring volunteering is:

- Flexible and responsive
- Supported and enabled
- Sociable and connected
- Valued
- Meaningful and purposeful
- Diversity positive.

## Local Context

Volunteering in West Dunbartonshire is a daily accumulation of thousands of individual decisions – personal, social, planned, opportunistic and influenced by a range of social and economic factors – supported by a diverse network of neighbourhood and faith groups, third sector organisations, social enterprises and public service agencies supporting a continuum of activity.



Research undertaken with local organisations<sup>4</sup> and individual volunteer<sup>5</sup> in 2021 suggest around 30% of the local population volunteer each year. Reasons for involvement vary. Volunteering may be seen as a civic responsibility, as a personal commitment to give back, to use or develop skills, to improve health and

<sup>4</sup> WDCVS Third Sector Census report, 2021

<sup>5</sup> WDCVS 'Volunteering and Me' survey, 2021

wellbeing or as a means to support employability. With the exception of the pandemic response, this value has remained stable for a number of years and suggests that volunteering opportunities are predominately chosen on the basis of geographic proximity and influenced heavily by local social issues. Support for informal<sup>6</sup> volunteering is significant and additional trends identified include an increasing demand for volunteering options in support of pre-employment experience, professional skill-sharing, additional support needs, episodic and response, group, Employer Supported and micro volunteering opportunities.

In line with communities across Scotland, the traditional and current West Dunbartonshire volunteer base reflects a majority middle and older-aged volunteering population. In looking to expand opportunities for engagement, it is important to recognise some of the key influencing factors at play, including:

- Cost of living challenges requiring potential volunteers to return to the labour market or seek second employment
- Negative health impacts arising from one or more of the identified Covid harms
- Retirement trends and changes in retirement ages
- Increased caring responsibilities as life expectancy increases.

Although volunteering is distinct from paid work, it is increasingly impacted by labour market issues. Notably, this includes the increasing work-search requirements of Universal Credit and the shift of social care students and career-changers from volunteering as a means of gaining experience to paid-shift employment, in response to social care staffing challenges.

### **Addressing the Challenges**

Mitigating against these challenges and maximising the potential impact of the strategy requires a focus on a number of key determinants of success.

### **Ensuring the supply of meaningful volunteering opportunities**

The nature of volunteering is value driven. As distinct from paid work, it builds on the interests and motivations of those taking part and to be successful requires the framing of opportunities from a volunteer perspective and not organisational need, alone. Where volunteers work alongside paid-staff, roles must be distinct, complementing and adding value to this work.

### **Role and Engagement Flexibility**

Volunteering is a life-long activity and to ensure the ambition of 'volunteering for all' can be achieved, opportunities to participate must reflect this. Where 'testing the waters' may lead to increased participation, equally definitive commitments can be impacted by the needs of work and family life, often at short-notice.

### **Resourcing Volunteering Effectively**

Volunteering is a free will activity, but it does not come without cost. While it is widely recognised, if not universally actioned, that volunteers should not be 'out of pocket' as a result of their participation, the entitlement to appropriately resourced volunteering support has less prominence.

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<sup>6</sup> Formal opportunities are those conducted through a constituted organisation or agency. Informal activities are independently undertaken on an individual level to help others or as part of a collaborative activity in response to a particular need or issue

## **Increasing diversity in the volunteer base**

Enabling a culture of 'volunteering for all' requires consideration of the possible barriers to engagement. In the West Dunbartonshire context, these include:

- Proportionately lower rates of participation amongst citizens experiencing ill-health and disability
- Mis-interpretations around the engagement of citizens in receipt of state benefits
- Deprivation and low income
- Age – particularly the lack of opportunities for those under the age of 16
- Perceived barriers e.g. around previous offending behaviour, and
- Cultural influences.

## **Strategic Vision**

West Dunbartonshire is a great place to volunteer, offering everyone who wishes to, an opportunity to participate regardless of how much time they have to give. A place where volunteering is well-resourced, best practice drives activity, and volunteers feel valued and recognised for their contribution to the social and economic wellbeing of our communities.

## **Strategic Objectives**

### **Participation**

Continue to promote and raise the profile of volunteering for all our citizens, where appropriate by taking a shared and collective approach, and maximizing the volunteer voice

### **Inclusion**

To support volunteer involving organisations to define their needs and develop a range of high quality and diverse volunteering opportunities accessible to people across the local authority area – including more opportunities for younger volunteers

### **Policy**

We will actively challenge and address barriers to participation in volunteering, acknowledging the valuable contribution volunteering makes to reducing social isolation, improving mental health and wider wellbeing, improving skills and ameliorating the effects of worklessness

### **Recognition**

There will be an improved standard of volunteering experience for people who volunteer, offering appropriate recognition suitable to their differing motivations

### **Place**

Make it easier for the volunteering sector to support our public services and help address the priorities comprising the Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP)

## **Our Values**

**Choice** – Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom not to become involved.

**Diversity** - Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, race, colour, nationality, religion or belief, ethnic or national origins, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

**Mutual Benefit** - Volunteers offer their contribution and skills unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution. Giving time to volunteering must be recognised as establishing a reciprocal relationship in which the volunteer also benefits and feels that his or her contribution is personally fulfilling.

**Recognition** - There must be explicit recognition that valuing the contribution of volunteers is fundamental to a fair relationship between volunteers, voluntary and community organisations and government. This includes recognising the contribution to the organisation, the community, the social economy and wider social objectives.

## **Governance, Oversight and Alignment**

The Empowered DIG will oversee the delivery of the Volunteering Strategy and its associated actions, reporting to the Community Planning Management Board annually, or as requested. The strategy acknowledges and aligns with the key community planning themes of Sustainability, Wellbeing and Empowerment, which will see the impact of volunteering contribute across the DIG family.

### **Sustainability**

- Volunteering Trends: Meeting the life-course challenge
- Free will, not free: Meeting the resourcing challenge
- Every contribution matters: Meeting the need for formal and informal volunteering development
- Organisational resilience: Meeting the resourcing challenge and promoting reciprocity

### **Wellbeing**

- Financial wellbeing: Meeting the cost of engagement challenge
- Emotional wellbeing: Meeting the volunteering experience challenge
- Physical and mental wellbeing: Maximising the role of volunteering in supporting positive health

### **Empowerment**

- Community engagement: Maximising strong social networks through regular and meaningful contribution of time, promoting confidence and trust
- Inclusion: Traditionally under-represented groups feel more included and supported to overcome barriers to participation
- Community asset building: Recognising our citizens and how their motivations, skills and experience are valued
- Civic participation: Citizens feel better informed and supported to participate in civic life.

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## West Dunbartonshire Volunteering Strategy Implementation Plan

Theme	Activity	Participation	Inclusion	Policy	Recognition	Place	System Leadership	Timescale	Measure of Success
Sustainability	Community Planning Partners recognise the positive impact of volunteering and implemented appropriate corporate volunteering policies and processes	✓		✓			Empowered DIG	March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% community planning partners have a volunteering policy</li> </ul>
	Increase number of Volunteer Involving Organisation (including CPP partners) signatories to the local Volunteering Charter	✓		✓			WDCVS/ InVOLve Forum	March 2024 March 2025 March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% organisation sign-up</li> <li>95% organisation sign-up</li> <li>100% sign-up</li> </ul>
	VIOs across all sectors are supported to increase the number of high quality, inclusive opportunities they offer	✓	✓	✓			WDCVS/InVOLve Forum	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10% increase in activity per annum</li> </ul>
	Increase the numbers of people volunteering & expand access to volunteering for groups at risk of exclusion	✓	✓			✓	WDCVS/InVOLve Forum	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Annual campaigns</li> <li>10% increase in activity per annum</li> </ul>
	Focus attention on maintaining a strong balance of opportunity demand/supply	✓				✓	WDCVS/InVOLve Forum	Ongoing	
	Analysis of volunteering resourcing arising from the annual sector census	✓		✓			WDCVS	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual report and action plan developed</li> </ul>
	Better promote external funding options supporting increased volunteer engagement and best practice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	WDCVS	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15% increase in secured funding per annum</li> </ul>
	Coordinate appeals for volunteers - thematically and geographically - making use of neighbourhood outreach opportunities (Supporting 20 minute communities)	✓	✓			✓	WDCVS/ InVOLve Forum	March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outreach calendar developed</li> </ul>
	Develop and launch Trustee recruitment campaign	✓	✓		✓		WDCVS	Nov 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Campaign Statistics</li> </ul>

	Wider use of LinkUp West Dunbartonshire community portal to share informal opportunities	✓	✓			✓	Empowered DIG	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15% increase in activity per annum</li> </ul>
	Increase number of volunteering roles available for young people under 16 years of age	✓	✓		✓		WDCVS/InVOLve Forum	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10% increase per annum</li> </ul>
	Stronger links forged between employers and communities through increased recognition of Employer Supported Volunteering	✓		✓		✓	Empowered DIG	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased level of ESV activity</li> </ul>
	Refresh engagement with DWP to address barriers to engagement	✓		✓			WDCVS	Ongoing	
	Increase citizen awareness of and engagement with opportunities to volunteer in the civic life of West Dunbartonshire	✓		✓		✓	Empowered DIG	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Membership - Community Councils</li> <li>Membership - RSL boards</li> <li>Participation rates - Children's Panel</li> <li>Participation rates - PB</li> </ul>
	Explore opportunities for shared volunteer induction and training			✓			WDCVS/InVOLve Forum	March 2024	

Theme	Activity	Participation	Inclusion	Policy	Recognition	Place	System Leadership	Timescale	Measure of Success
Wellbeing	Promote and support sector engagement in the establishment of a local volunteering sector quality pipeline – Charter, Volunteer Friendly and Investing in Volunteers	✓	✓		✓		WDCVS/ Volunteer Scotland	March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pipeline established</li> </ul>

	Review and suggest options to incorporate volunteering costs specifically in local funds			✓	✓		Empowered DIG	Ongoing	
	Progress 100% of opportunities supporting payment of travel expenses	✓	✓		✓	✓	WDCVS/Involve Forum	March 2024 March 2025 March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>80% opportunities</li> <li>85% opportunities</li> <li>90% opportunities</li> </ul>
	Refresh disclosure training and compliance support opportunities in line with legislative changes	✓	✓	✓			WDCVS/Volunteer Scotland	March 2024	
	Conduct an annual Volunteer Managers Survey including a focus on wellbeing, peer support and career development			✓	✓		WDCVS/InVOLve Forum	Annual	
	Refresh engagement with support agencies to increase opportunities for supportive therapeutic volunteering	✓	✓		✓		WDCVS	Ongoing	
	Increase neighbourhood level programme of Introduction to Volunteering sessions	✓	✓			✓	WDCVS	Ongoing	
	Increase number of online and home-based opportunities, addressing barriers to engagement	✓	✓				WDCVS	Ongoing	

Theme	Activity	Participation	Inclusion	Policy	Recognition	Place	System Leadership	Timescale	Measure of Success
Empowerment	Develop the consultative and practice development role of the InVOLve Volunteer Engagers Forum	✓		✓			WDCVS	March 2024	

	Refresh the local Volunteering Charter	✓	✓	✓	✓		WDCVS/ InVOLve Forum		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% Community Planning Partner and VIO Sign-up achieved</li> </ul>
	Increase availability of volunteer best practice resources via the WDCVS website	✓	✓				WDCVS	October 2023	
	Refresh the Volunteer 100 initiative and annual volunteering survey to better promote the volunteer voice	✓	✓	✓	✓		WDCVS	March 2024	
	Develop and Roll-out inclusive volunteering campaign and training support pack	✓	✓				WDCVS/ SLWG	Dec 2023	
	Wider promotion of volunteering accreditation options	✓	✓		✓		WDCVS/ InVOLve Forum	March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Saltire Awards Achievers</li> <li>CoVA certificates issued</li> <li>VISA certificates issued</li> </ul>
	Coordinate arrangements for a 'Big Thank You' Volunteers Week programme of activity				✓		WDCVS/ InVOLve Forum	March 2024	
	Increase visibility and role of volunteering in community asset building conversations			✓	✓		Empowered DIG	March 2024	