

VOLUNTEERING IN THE YOUTH WORK SECTOR: AN ACTION PLAN

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MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



Since taking up appointment as Minister for Children and Early Years in the new Scottish Government, I have visited a range of youth work projects and met many committed and talented workers and volunteers. I have also met with representatives of many youth voluntary organisations. I have been impressed with the sector's commitment and with the impact excellent youth work clearly has on young people today. The youth work sector clearly shares our commitment to providing more choices and more chances for young people which enhance their lives and deliver positive outcomes.

I have also been pleased to support you in taking forward the improvements you asked for in response to the Youth Work Strategy consultation last year. And I have been impressed by the voluntary youth organisations' commitment to work with us to identify areas where we can better support the people who volunteer to work with young people.

Every day thousands of Scots give their skills, experience, time and energy to deliver opportunities that have a positive impact on young people's lives. Whether a volunteer's role is to work directly with young people or to help with administration, open up facilities, or drive a minibus, their contribution is vital. We appreciate their talents and admire their commitment but we also need to support them and the organisations that depend on them.

This Action Plan has been developed along with the voluntary youth sector, based on their expertise. It is designed to provide new resources and practical support. It is intended to enhance individual volunteers' experience while increasing organisations' capacity to deliver more and build better partnerships.

I am confident that the result will be an increased capacity in the youth work sector to offer young people more choices and more chances and I look forward to working with you to make that happen.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adam Ingram". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Adam Ingram

Minister for Children and Early Years

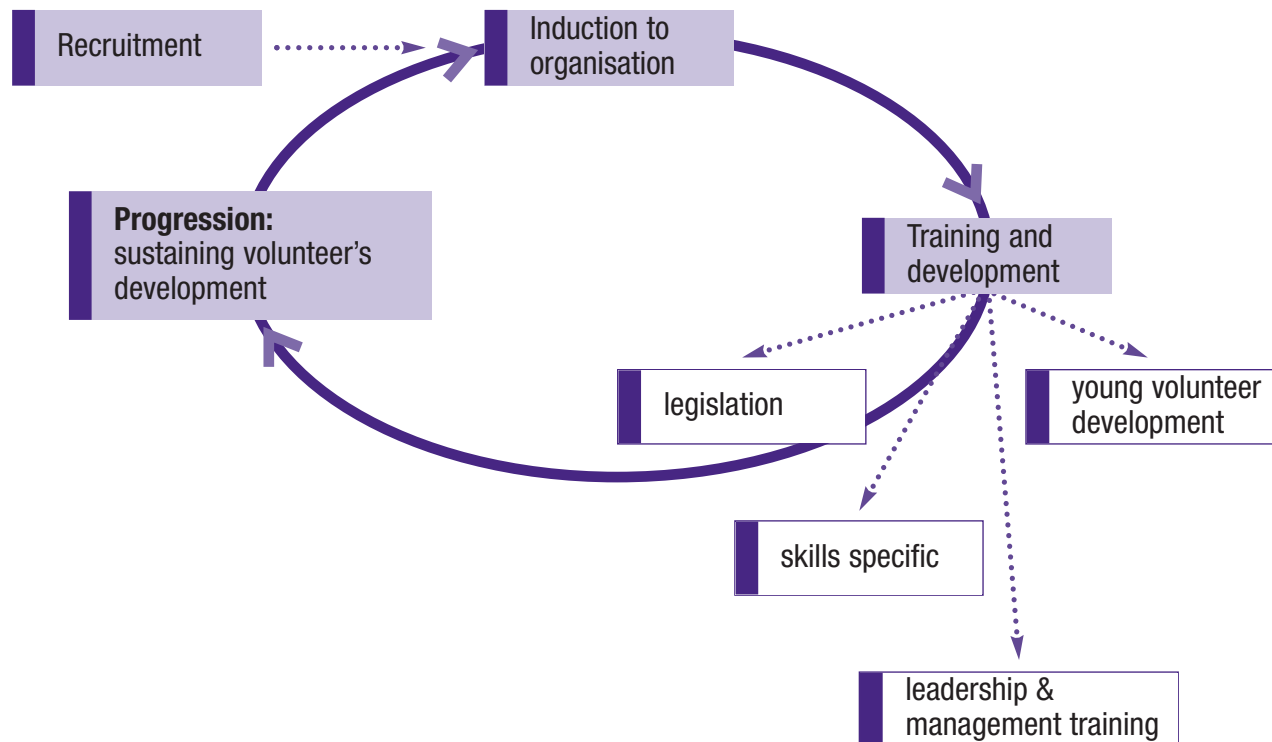
1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Much youth work delivery in Scotland relies on the time and skill of volunteers. Their willingness to contribute means that many young people have access to life-enriching experiences and learning opportunities.
- 1.2** *Moving Forward: A Strategy for Improving Young People's Chances Through Youth Work* recognised the value of volunteers and included a commitment to work with the voluntary sector to develop a specific Action Plan for Volunteering in the youth work sector. The overall aim of this Action Plan is to **support the youth work sector deliver more choices and more chances for more young people through a stronger network of volunteers**. It sets out the outcomes we believe will make most difference and the actions necessary to achieve them. Some are the direct responsibility of Government, others will be taken forward by youth work partners. All of them require us to work together to make the maximum impact.
- 1.3** This Action Plan has been developed with the support and input of the voluntary youth work sector. Youth Scotland, YMCA, YouthLink Scotland, the uniformed organisations, VDS and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award have had particular involvement in shaping the proposals, with constructive additions and comments provided by YouthLink's Voluntary Organisations' Chief Officers' Group (VOCOG). Together they have helped us identify priority areas for action that will make a real positive difference for volunteers and the organisations they work with. The Scottish Government will support the sector to deliver improved resources and collaborate to take this action forward.



2. THE VOLUNTEER LIFE CYCLE

2.1 The outcomes of the Action Plan are based around the stages of the volunteer life cycle, at all stages emphasising **recognition of the value and impact** of volunteers. This is a flexible model, adaptable and relevant to individual volunteers' own preferences and motivations. By having the right support at each stage, a volunteer will be able to give most value to their organisation while, at the same time, getting the optimum benefit and satisfaction from their time and input.



3. RECOGNITION

- 3.1** The commitment of volunteers is valued, appreciated and universally admired – by the organisations they support, the young people they work with, the wider community and by the Scottish Government. But we can do more to demonstrate to volunteers that their contribution and experience is recognised. This recognition underpins the Action Plan and will be evident in wider policy development across the Scottish Government.

The Outcome we want:

For volunteers to feel valued and recognised for the contribution they make to young people's lives. And for their understanding and experience to help shape policies that offer young people more choices and more chances.

The Action we propose:

- ⇒ We will work to ensure the role of youth work volunteers and the contribution of their organisations is recognised in delivering the Scottish Government's five Strategic Objectives – a Scotland which is smarter, healthier, greener, safer and stronger, and wealthier and fairer.
- ⇒ We will support local authorities to have a key named Community Learning and Development contact for youth work and for this information to be easily available to volunteers. And for local authorities to further develop links with voluntary youth work organisations and local Volunteer Centres strengthening Community Planning Partnerships.
- ⇒ We will ask Youth Scotland to work with Volunteer Development Scotland and local authorities to be a key source of Volunteer Management tools and best practice.

4. RECRUITMENT

- 4.1** Many respondents to the Youth Work Strategy consultation called for more publicity or promotion to encourage people to volunteer in youth work. In the 21st century, the environment for volunteering is changing, with more people volunteering for shorter periods of time. This means that youth work providers must recruit more people for a range of often complex roles. And they need to place new volunteers quickly into roles which suit them best.
- 4.2** Some organisations have already focused on improving this process, from recruitment to placement. YMCA for example, has undertaken a pilot identifying best recruitment methods and effective volunteer placement. As part of this Action Plan, Youth Scotland will draw together existing good practice to develop a recruitment guidance resource for any voluntary youth organisation to adapt for its own use.

The Outcome we want:

For any youth work organisation to be able to recruit a strong complement of volunteers and place them in roles which suit them best.

The Action we propose:

- ☞ We will ask Youth Scotland to develop a proactive recruitment resource for use across the sector. To highlight good recruitment practice and provide tools to support organisations engaging in a changing environment, and in moving new volunteers quickly into the best roles for them and the organisation.



5. INDUCTION – KNOWING YOUR VALUE

- 5.1** Many people start volunteering because they care and want to make a difference to young people's lives. It therefore matters greatly that every volunteer can understand their specific role in the 'big picture' of their organisation and realise the value of their own contribution.
- 5.2** Every volunteer contribution – from cleaning facilities, maintaining resources, answering phones or administrative support, to the face-to-face development with young people – is valued and crucial to providing the best opportunities for young people.
- 5.3** Organisations particularly value the skills and experience which volunteers bring with them. They have identified that a key point for recognising and valuing volunteers is when they come into the organisation. At the start of their volunteering cycle, an organisation can identify what support and development the volunteer can be offered as they progress.
- 5.4** A good induction experience is invaluable in both helping volunteers understand their role in achieving the organisation's wider purpose in providing positive outcomes for young people, and in identifying the training and support that they need to help them best fulfil their new role. The Action Plan therefore includes the development of an induction model, again based on good practice and adaptable for any youth work provider.

The Outcome we want:

For volunteers to understand their role in providing positive outcomes for young people from the early days of their volunteering experience.

The Action we propose:

- ⇒ We will ask Youth Scotland to develop a model of induction into organisations. It will offer guidance on how to induct volunteers into the organisation, and where to look for support in doing this.

6. TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT: LEGISLATION

- 6.1** There are concerns that the perception of current levels of bureaucracy may put off volunteers or clog up resources and volunteers' time. We are committed to working with voluntary organisations to ensure clear information is available on disclosure checks and the new arrangements under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Bill. The voluntary youth sector is well represented on the Voluntary Sector Issues group and we are committed to working with you to ensuring the best mechanisms are in place. This may be through direct access to Disclosure Scotland for national voluntary organisations, or continuing to support Central Register Body in Scotland (CRBS) checks for volunteers for smaller organisations.
- 6.2** There is also value for volunteers and organisations to have a central contact for advice, training and direction to help them understand what their legal requirements are, and how best to meet them.

The Outcome we want:

For youth work organisations to understand the requirements of legislation and to have effective support in meeting these.

The Action we propose:

- We will work with voluntary organisations to ensure the most effective methods of processing disclosure checks are identified and followed.
- We will ask YouthLink Scotland to work with Youth Scotland and local authorities to offer advice on training and to offer training events, online resources or user-friendly information guides.

7. TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT: SKILLS

- 7.1** Organisations view effective training for volunteers as a high priority. They recognise that volunteers are individuals and have differing training needs depending on their role, previous experience and personal development goals.
- 7.2** Excellent training is already available but not all voluntary organisations have the capacity to develop their own training on a wide range of issues. There is significant potential to share more training and knowledge within the sector and organisations that have developed expertise are keen to share it. There is potential for all our organisations and volunteers to benefit from models and resources already developed by other organisations, whether through local or thematic events, online resources or DVDs.
- 7.3** We will also work with the Standards Council for Community Learning and Development to recognise and provide for the unique skills and qualities required of youth workers and volunteers. And through its work encourage more people to choose youth work as their profession or as a volunteering option.

The Outcome we want:

For volunteers to feel equipped and confident in their roles, allowing them to perform to the best of their abilities. And for all organisations to benefit through more effective sharing of training and resources.

The Action we propose:

- We will ask YouthLink Scotland to work with Youth Scotland to link up organisations, geographically or thematically, to provide access to training events and/or resources for volunteers.





8. TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT: YOUNG PEOPLE VOLUNTEERING

- 8.1** Very often young people who benefit from the opportunities offered by an organisation decide to volunteer with that organisation to give back their time and skills. Volunteering can also offer excellent personal development and leadership opportunities for a young person who takes this route.
- 8.2** Many organisations already have effective programmes in place to develop their own young people. These include the Scouts, Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the Scottish Youth Parliament. There is potential to bring together existing resources and expertise to help organisations that may not have the same capacity.

The Outcome we want:

For more young people to be supported as they move from being users of a service to becoming volunteers.

The Action we propose:

- We will ask Youth Scotland to use existing successful frameworks to develop a model to help any youth organisation to move existing members into a volunteering role. And to offer training through events with partners and online resources to prepare and develop young people as they take on new roles and responsibilities.
- We will ask Young Scot to offer information to young people on why and how to volunteer, and to include local volunteering opportunities in their youth opportunities database.
- We will encourage organisations to recognise young people's volunteering contribution and accredit them where possible through programmes such as Millennium Volunteers, Youth Achievement Awards, Duke of Edinburgh's Award etc.

9. TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT: MANAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP

- 9.1** While volunteers have opportunities to use their existing skills, they may also find themselves in unfamiliar situations requiring new skills. They might, for example, be appointed to a management group or board and need to develop new skills. These skills and experiences can also be transferable to a volunteer's career or to other volunteering opportunities. More employers recognise the development value in volunteer opportunities and actively support employees through time off or matching funds raised. There is scope for more employers both to benefit from and contribute to employees' volunteering experience.
- 9.2** Volunteers do, of course, need support in expanding their own horizons, particularly if they adopt a management role in a voluntary youth organisation. The right support can help volunteers know what is expected of them, how best to work in their volunteer role and how to manage, support and organise other volunteers if that is part of their role.

The Outcome we want:

For volunteers to be trained and confident to take on management positions within organisations.

The Action we propose:

- We will ask Youth Scotland, to identify the skills required for volunteers who sit in management or leadership positions within organisations. And to provide concise guidance for organisations on how best to support volunteers in this capacity.



10. PROGRESSION: SUSTAINING VOLUNTEERS' DEVELOPMENT

- 10.1** After induction, volunteers continue to benefit from continuing development, support and training. Opportunities to progress can keep volunteers motivated, engaged and up-to-date with developments in the sector. And this translates into better opportunities for the young people they work with. Volunteering can open up new horizons. And for some volunteers this may mean moving on to volunteer with other organisations, taking up new roles or considering youth work as a career path.
- 10.2** Many volunteers may not wish, or need, to commit to formal training courses but will still benefit from on the ground volunteer management support and by learning from other volunteers. Mentoring can be particularly effective and tailored to an individual's particular needs, whether that be for a new volunteer in a new role or for an experienced and talented volunteer keen to develop specific skills to facilitate a new career or career development. Mentoring approaches are frequently adopted in delivering youth work and can be adapted to support the volunteer network as well.

The Outcome we want:

For volunteers to learn from each other and feel supported in their role.

The Action we propose:

- We will ask Youth Scotland, building on existing programmes, to develop a 'mentoring model' resource that organisations can adopt to support and develop their volunteers.

10.3 As it is important for individual volunteers, there is also extensive knowledge and expertise around in organisations. We have asked YouthLink Scotland to work with Youth Scotland to look at the potential of linking larger organisations with smaller organisations, to learn from them and tap into their wealth of expertise. This may also indicate where there is capacity in larger organisations to open up training events to local organisations which may not have the capacity to put on events as frequently.

The Outcome we want:

For organisations to learn from and support one another.

The Action we propose:

- We will ask YouthLink Scotland to work with Youth Scotland to set up a pilot mentoring scheme for smaller organisations to receive support from larger organisations. Pairing up organisations may depend on the specific development goals at a particular point in time.

11. SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Action	Delivery Lead
Recognition – volunteers to feel valued and recognised, and their understanding and experience to shape policies offering more choices and more chances for young people.	
Role of youth work volunteers recognised in Government policies.	Scottish Government
Local Authorities working closer with voluntary sector, strengthening Community Planning Partnerships.	Local Authorities Voluntary Sector
Development of Volunteer Management tools and dissemination of tools and best practice.	Volunteer Development Scotland Youth Scotland
Recruitment – to have a strong complement of volunteers, placed in roles which suit them.	
Recruitment resource, highlighting good practice and tools to support engaging in a changing environment.	Youth Scotland
Induction – volunteers to understand their role in providing positive outcomes for young people.	
Model of induction, offering guidance on how to induct volunteers and where to gain support.	Youth Scotland
Training & Development: Legislation – to understand requirements of legislation and effective support in meeting these.	
Disclosure check method most effective.	Scottish Government (Vulnerable Issues Group)
Advice, training and support.	YouthLink Scotland Youth Scotland

Action	Delivery Lead
Training & Development: Skills – volunteers to feel equipped and confident in their roles, and organisations to benefit from sharing of expertise and resources.	
Linking of organisations to provide training and/or resources.	YouthLink Scotland Youth Scotland
Training & Development: Young People – More young people to be supported as they develop in volunteering.	
Develop ‘Youth Development Model’.	Youth Scotland
Accessible information for young people.	Young Scot
Recognition of young people’s volunteering.	Youth Scotland and External Organisations
Training & Development: Management & Leadership – Volunteers to be trained and confident in taking on management roles.	
Identify skills required for volunteers and guidance in expectations and required training.	Youth Scotland
Progression: Sustaining Volunteers’ Development – Volunteers and organisations to learn from one another and support one another.	
Develop a ‘mentoring model’ for volunteers.	Youth Scotland
Pilot a mentoring scheme for organisations.	YouthLink Scotland Youth Scotland

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11.1 The voluntary sector has already been working together to start progress on the outcomes in this Action Plan, gathering good practice and developing plans both locally and at a national level. In development of these outcomes, there will be opportunity for volunteers to be involved and contribute. If there are suggestions, or models or resources you would like to contribute, please contact Youth Scotland to get involved.



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