

VOLUNTEER STRATEGY

2024 - 2029



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1. Foreword

Volunteer activity helps our region thrive and the range and scope of volunteering is wide and varied.

Voluntary effort is at the core of community empowerment and development for Dumfries and Galloway in ensuring the sustainability and vibrancy of our communities. Our Council acknowledges the importance of supporting the culture of volunteering across the region, working in partnership with communities to harness their broad skills, enthusiasm and knowledge. We want to work with communities to promote volunteering to enhance service delivery and to empower communities to be part of the solution in a local context.

Our Council introduced our second and significantly updated Volunteer Strategy in 2017 and is now working with over 800 volunteers. Whether that's planting and maintaining flower beds, keeping our community spaces looking beautiful, carrying out beach cleans and litter picks, helping at a youth group, or looking after our museums' collections, volunteers contribute hugely to the wellbeing of Dumfries and Galloway as a great place to live, work and visit.

In December 2022, our Council became the first whole Council in Scotland to achieve Investing in Volunteers (IiV) status. IiV is Volunteer Scotland's nationally recognised standard for good practice in volunteering. Achievement of IiV, which involved a rigorous evaluation of the Council's volunteer programme, is recognition of the important role our volunteers play in supporting our Council's Principles and service delivery.





Volunteers express high level of satisfaction in their work with our Council and are encouraged to grow and develop in their roles. We realise, however, that volunteers are diverse in their reasons for volunteering. For instance, for some it may be to gain new skills and experiences in preparation for employment or a new career, perhaps to share specific skills and expertise to help others, or it may be for health and wellbeing reasons such as to connect with others and make new friends or to gain confidence to develop a sense of purpose or experience a sense of achievement, or simply to give back to the local community. As the reasons for volunteering are varied, we want to reflect that in our revised Strategy and to recognise what our volunteers have told us they want to gain from their experience.

By updating our Volunteer Strategy for 2024 – 2029, we can ensure that we continue to reflect on recent experience and grow our volunteering offer across all our services and communities. We want to ensure that the council gets the best from its volunteers and that our volunteers have the best experience possible in their council role.

“I have always enjoyed playing netball throughout school to the present day. As well as playing competitively, I have also coached & umpired Netball at primary, secondary school & club level. Being a Volunteer Walking Netball Coach is giving me the opportunity to share my skills, knowledge, and passion for the sport I love. It is so rewarding to see the participants smiling, having fun, and making new friends whilst playing Walking netball.”

Andrea, Volunteer Walking Netball Coach





2. Background/Context

“Volunteering is the giving of time and energy through a third party, which can bring measurable benefits to the volunteer, individual beneficiaries, groups and organisations, communities, the environment, and society at large. It is a choice undertaken of one’s own free will and is not motivated primarily for financial gain or for a wage or salary.”

Scottish Government

2.1 Volunteering in Scotland

In response to this, 2022 saw the launch of Scotland’s Volunteering Action Plan, a collaborative effort led by Volunteer Scotland and the Scottish Government. Building upon [Volunteering for All: The National Framework](#) published in 2019, Scotland’s [Volunteering Action Plan](#) aims to create a Scotland where everyone can volunteer, more often, and throughout their lives. It seeks to raise the profile of volunteering and its impact on society.

“Volunteering is the invisible thread which binds our communities together and can often be taken for granted.”

Shona Robison, Cabinet Secretary for
Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

2.2 Volunteering in Dumfries and Galloway

Dumfries and Galloway Council aims to provide our volunteers with an exceptional experience by establishing an efficient approach to recruitment, training, engagement, and coordination of our volunteers.

The gaining of the Investing in Volunteers (IiV) award in 2022 symbolises our commitment to the continuous improvement of our volunteering offer and in securing the IiV, we appreciate that this is only start of the journey. As a Council, working in partnership with Volunteer Scotland, we have an opportunity to further enhance our standards and strengthen our volunteer programme, to ensure our volunteers receive the very best experience, offering opportunities to upskill and enhance health and wellbeing.

Dumfries and Galloway Council’s Volunteer Champions Network was established in 2023 as a result of our partnership with Volunteer Scotland. Within this network, our Volunteer Champions play a key role in increasing the visibility and presence of volunteering across Council services and with partner organisations and in empowering and amplifying the voices of our volunteers. To further enhance the volunteer experience, we are dedicated to expanding the range of opportunities for volunteers to shape the development of our Council’s volunteer programme.



As a Council, we continue to work in partnership with Volunteer Dumfries and Galloway, (Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway), which exists to support volunteering and volunteers across the region. As a key partner, Volunteer Dumfries and Galloway assists us in the promotion of volunteer roles and provides valuable support to help volunteers take the next step by matching their specific skillsets and interests to posts available in the wider community.

Our updated [Council Plan for 2023-2028](#) builds on the challenges of the past few years where we saw local communities come together to support each other through the pandemic. New challenges have emerged since that time, including the rising cost of living for people and families. There are opportunities for our region in the future and our council is committed to working with our communities and partners to ensure these are realised. The Plan centres on our Council's core set of Principles:

- Safeguard our future.
- Support our citizens.
- Support our communities; and
- Be a responsive Council

Our volunteers play an instrumental role in helping us to deliver on these Principles.

“Volunteering has been a wonderful way to meet new people and spend time with people whose company I enjoy. Volunteering is something I look forward to each week and am always excited to see what tidbits of local history are waiting to be discovered. I like the feeling that even though many of the pictures I’ve scanned have no bearing on me or my life, they will be accessible to the public and can be appreciated by relatives or friends of the people pictured.”

Izzy, Heritage Service Volunteer





2.3 Volunteers and Paid Staff

It is important to emphasise that our volunteers will never replace paid staff or take on roles that are meant for staff members. A Volunteer's role is complementary to the work produced by paid staff. Paid staff provide the framework, day to day guidance and support within which volunteering can thrive. Our council recognises volunteers as an important part of our team with a distinctive and complementary role that adds value to the work of paid staff. Managers and supervisors will be mindful that:

- volunteers will not be asked to work in ways which directly facilitate a decrease in paid staff.
- volunteers will not be used in times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff. They may continue with their regular role, but should not be asked to undertake additional duties.
- volunteers are involved at appropriate levels of the organisation in relation to their skills and interests in roles that complement the work of paid staff.
- volunteers have responsibility for carrying out defined pieces of work and will not be asked to do anything that is not defined in their role description or that they have not been given training to do.
- training will be delivered for Council staff to ensure that all employees are clear about best practice in supporting volunteers. Staff responsible for training or supervising volunteers should be competent and qualified to do so safely.

3. Types of Volunteering

Our council values the contribution of volunteers and promotes, coordinates, and celebrates volunteering by adopting best practice in terms of advertising, recruitment, development, and appreciation of all of our volunteers. We have identified three types of volunteers to define the level of support required: formal volunteers and informal volunteers who are registered with Dumfries and Galloway Council and community action/social participation volunteers who support activities in our wider communities.



Formal Volunteers	Informal Volunteers
<p>Traditional model of volunteering</p> <p>Clearly defined volunteer role</p> <p>Regular and patterned hours</p> <p>Signed volunteer agreement</p> <p>Registered volunteer with Dumfries and Galloway Council</p>	<p>Supports a Council service on an ad-hoc basis</p> <p>Allows individuals to dip in and out of volunteering to suit their lifestyle</p> <p>Might support one-off events or project specific opportunities</p> <p>Not directly supervised by Council employees but have a relationship with our Council to varying degrees, including the provision of advice and access to training and equipment.</p> <p>Signed volunteer agreement</p> <p>Registered volunteer with Dumfries and Galloway Council</p>
Community Action/Social Participation Volunteers	
<p>Works closely with our Council to build community and social capacity</p> <p>Might support Third Sector and voluntary groups.</p> <p>Work on an independent basis and are not required to sign a volunteer agreement</p>	

All forms of volunteering are valued and appreciated by our Council. This strategy recognises the wide-ranging positive effects of volunteering in our communities and the important role volunteers play in assisting with our service delivery and outlines our ambition to further develop our volunteer opportunities to support individuals to learn, develop and be part of a community.



4. Our Commitment to Volunteering

Our Volunteer Strategy outlines our commitment to volunteering and the objectives we want to achieve to ensure that we are continuously improving our volunteering experience.

Dumfries and Galloway Council will continue to work to ensure that:

- Volunteers are highly valued and complement the services provided.
- Volunteers are given a positive experience.
- Volunteers are treated with respect and regarded as equal members of the team.
- Volunteers are supported in a flexible way that meets the needs of each individual.



5. Our Objectives

Outcome 1: To endeavour to remove barriers that inhibit people from volunteering.

This objective looks at how we can enhance the accessibility of volunteer opportunities, by:

- Identifying and understanding challenges preventing people, particularly those from under-represented groups, from volunteering with our Council; and
- Actively working to mitigate these barriers where possible.

Outcome 2: To maintain continuous improvement of the management and development of our volunteering programme.

This objective looks at streamlining the volunteering journey, by:

- Creating a central location for all information on volunteering, making it easier for potential volunteers and staff to find out about opportunities.
- Widely advertising development opportunities for existing volunteers to support the individual's personal growth.
- Providing a forum for volunteers to give feedback and become involved in decision-making which affects them; and
- Supporting and developing opportunities for potential and existing volunteers with Dumfries and Galloway Council.

Outcome 3: To recognise, reward and celebrate our volunteers.

This objective recognises ways to celebrate the efforts of our volunteers. Our volunteers tell us that saying thank is sometimes enough, but we can also recognise volunteers through, for example:

- Spotlighting volunteer stories and sharing testimonials with their permission via social media, community bulletins, etc.
- Celebrations during Volunteers Week.
- Nominating volunteers for national and regional awards.
- Helping volunteers grow and progress.
- Providing attractive resources.

Outcome 4: To maintain Investing in Volunteers, UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management.

This objective emphasises Dumfries and Galloway's Commitment to maintaining Investing in Volunteers, by:

- Continuing to develop, review and strengthen our volunteer programme following advice from Volunteer Scotland.
- Rolling out Maintaining and Growing liV training Council-wide; and
- Maintaining our standards to achieve re-accreditation via Volunteer Scotland in 2025.



“Volunteering for Bikeability gave me the opportunity to share my passion for cycling, travel and learning with local children and adults and was a pathway to other opportunities in schools and beyond. The enthusiasm of the children is fantastic and incredibly rewarding as you give them confidence and new skills on bikes.”

Mike, Bikeability Volunteer

“As a keen cyclist I wanted to get involved in volunteering in a hobby I am passionate about and give my time to a worthwhile cause. I have found volunteering rewarding. I enjoy teaching new skills, meeting new people including other volunteers at different schools. It is encouraging to see the pupils improve their cycling skills and knowledge of their bikes. It is particularly rewarding to see pupils grow in confidence and discover the joy and benefits of cycling.”

Brian, Bikeability Volunteer





6. Monitoring The Strategy

Council Plan 2023 – 2028

The Council Plan contains a project which looks to invest in volunteering including environmental and cultural opportunities. This project is monitored through the successful completion of milestones updates and quarterly reports to Full Council.

Service Level Business Plan

Council wide data is collected and reported to Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee and the appropriate Area Committee on the number of volunteers supporting services across the region.

Annual Volunteering Report

An Annual Report will be prepared and submitted to the relevant Committee. The first annual report will be produced by 31 March 2025. The report will provide a picture of volunteering across the Council, including new volunteering experiences, stories, testimonials, and the economic value volunteering contributes to our council.

Achievement of Investing in Volunteers Re-accreditation

The re-accreditation process for Investing in Volunteers will take place in December 2025.





6.1 Evaluating the Impact of the Strategy

The impact of the Strategy will be evaluated through quantitative and qualitative evidence looking at volunteering experiences offered by our Council, supported by volunteer testimonials. In addition, the Council will endeavour to collect evidence to demonstrate volunteer pathways to skill-building, further education, and employment opportunities.

The economic value index developed by Volunteer Scotland will assist in determining the impact of the financial value the contribution of volunteer hours has on our Council.

7. Strategies and Plans Linking to The Volunteer Strategy

[Council Plan 2023 – 2028](#)

[CLD Partners Strategic Plan](#)

[Community Participation and Engagement Strategy](#)

[Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy 2022 - 2027](#)



Development of the Strategy – Appendix 1

Our Strategy has been built on feedback from volunteers, communities, individuals, and community groups, benchmarking and experience from other councils; national and best practice advice; consultation with Elected Members, local partners and hard to reach groups; and Impact Assessment.

4.1 Feedback from communities, individuals, and community councils:

- Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) Research with community groups, community councils, representative groups of minority communities; staff focus groups; and individual interviews with volunteers.

4.2 Benchmarking and experience of other organisations

- Analysis of Strategies and discussions with a wide range of other organisations in Scotland, including:
 - NHS Dumfries and Galloway
 - Volunteer Dumfries and Galloway (Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway Volunteering Interface)

4.3 National and best practice advice

- Volunteer Scotland
- National Volunteering Inclusion Network

4.4 Consultation with Elected Members

- Briefing and discussion session held on 24 May 2024.

4.5 Consultation with local partners

- Community Learning and Development Partners' Strategy Policy Group; and Trades Unions

4.6 Consultation with the Community Planning Equality and Diversity Group

- Representative organisations for Protected Characteristics particularly age, disability, gender, race, sexuality, and religion – facilitated discussion on 28 May 2024 with DGMA, TSDG, Scottish Fire and Rescue, and LGBT+

4.7 Stakeholder Impact Assessment

14 positive impacts; 4 neutral; 0 negative

