

**Cross Party Group on Volunteering AGM
Minute
Wednesday 30th January 2019, 1.30-2.30pm
Committee Room 1, Scottish Parliament
Convenor: Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP**

Attendees

MSP members of the Group

Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP – Scottish Liberal Democrat Party
Jeremy Balfour MSP - Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party

Non-MSPs Members of the Group:

Catriona MacLeod - CVS Inverclyde, David Maxwell – Volunteer Glasgow, Gail Cassidy – Volunteer Centre East Ayrshire, Gordon Brown – VC Borders, Ian McCall – Paths for all, Jennifer Reston – Aberlour, Jenny Snell – Youth Link Scotland, Joanne Stewart – Breast Cancer Care Scotland, Karen Garrott – Stroke Scotland, Katrina Sayer – Argyll TSI, Kim Atkinson – SSA, Linda Gill – CHSS, Fiona Inglis -VAF, Louise McGinty – Quarriers, Lucy Higginson – Homestart UK, Shelagh Young – Homestart UK, Marion Findlay – Volunteer Edinburgh, Matthew Linning – Volunteer Scotland, Morven McLean – CHAS, Paul Okroj – CHSS, Richard Park – Cross Reach, Ruth Hutton – SG Third Sector Unit, Sarah Cleary – Volunteer Edinburgh, Sarah Latto – Shelter Scotland, Sarah Van Putten – Befriending Networks, James Jopling – Samaritans, Lee Davidson – Shelter Scotland, Lynda Grieg – Shelter Scotland, Jemma Neville – Voluntary Arts Scotland, Paul Reddish – Project Scotland, Kieran Scott – Leonard Cheshire in Scotland, Cat Campbell – Children 1st, Anne McArdle – Volunteer Centre East Ayrshire, Gregor Muir – SSA, Mollie Brockie – CHSS, Ben Thomson – Carnegie UK Trust

Apologies

MSP members of the Group

Pauline McNeil MSP – Scottish Labour Party
Johann Lamont MSP – Scottish Labour Party
Fulton MacGregor MSP – Scottish National Party
Gordon Lindhurst MSP - Scottish National Party

Non-MSPs Members of the Group:

A considerable number of apologies were received for this meeting.

1. Welcome and introductions

The Convenor, Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Cross-Party Group on Volunteering in 2019 and took the opportunity to congratulate Paul Okroj on being named in the Queens New Year honours list to obtain an OBE for services to the voluntary sector.

The convenor highlighted that this was a great time for volunteering with significant infrastructures and research being developed such as the Volunteering Outcomes Framework, NCVO – Time Well Spent publication, political debate and implementation of the on isolation and loneliness strategy.

2. Minutes of Previous AGM meeting held on 30th October 2018

The minutes of the last meeting held on 30th October 2018 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. Proposed by Paul Okroj, CHSS, seconded by Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP.

3. Volunteering, Health and Wellbeing Research – Matthew Linning, Volunteer Scotland

Matthew presented the research findings Volunteer Scotland have undertaken on health and wellbeing, showing the significant health benefits from volunteering.

The full report can be found on Volunteer Scotland's website:

<https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-organisations/research-and-evaluation/publications/volunteering-health-wellbeing/>

Gordon Brown, VC Borders stated this research was very valuable but how do we get the wider message out. Approach from CLD teams within local authorities is forcing young people into volunteering as a tick box exercise which is putting the younger generation off volunteering, therefore having a knock-on effect for the future.

Paul Reddish – Project Scotland highlighted that there are conflicts between motivations and benefits to volunteering, more needs to be done to promote the benefits but still recognise skills development.

Research has shown that volunteering has a positive impact on mental health but the language we use can put young people off.

Shelagh Young – Homestart UK suggested a re-look at the demographics of volunteering, there needs to be a shift in age ranges/categories within research as this doesn't reflect people living longer, people having children at an older age, pension age has changed etc. This would provide a more realistic view on volunteering.

4. Health & Inequalities – Claire Stevens – Voluntary Health Scotland

Claire Stevens, Voluntary Health Scotland presented to the group the commitment Voluntary Health Scotland in tackling Health and Inequalities in Scotland. Health inequalities are the 'systematic differences in the health of people occupying unequal positions in society'. They are strongly associated with socio-economic inequalities but can also result from discrimination. Health inequalities are unfair, not inevitable, and must be tackled.

Claire highlighted the importance of volunteering in tackling health and inequalities to provide interventions in reducing inequalities. Yet the NHS Health Scotland publication doesn't refer to volunteering at all. This highlights that volunteering is still missing from key discussions and debates and hopes the National Implementation group of the Isolation and Loneliness strategy will tackle this issue.

Key documents published by VHS can be found below:

<https://vhscotland.org.uk/living-in-the-gap/>

<https://vhscotland.org.uk/health-topics/health-inequalities/>

5. Volunteering, Mental Health & Wellbeing – James Jopling – Samaritans

James Jopling from Samaritans provided an insight into the services which are provided and managed by volunteers. In 2018 250k individuals contacted Samaritans of which 46k were based in Glasgow. Volunteers deal with all the calls/text etc that come into the service some a direct and some are referrals from NHS.

The volunteers that provide the service are also selected, managed and mentored by volunteers which is a model that provides shared ownership and responsibility preventing hierarchy within the teams. It is a unique model as they are not directed by employed staff which allows them to build connections between each other. The volunteers at Samaritans call themselves Samaritans not volunteers which is also a unique factor of how the model works well. The average age of a Samaritan is 57 years old therefore highlighting a gap in a younger demographic.

The service is working well to support individuals who need it with 120-140 volunteers within Glasgow and Edinburgh.

You can find the latest impact report from Samaritans here: <https://www.samaritans.org/about-samaritans/our-organisation/annual-reports-and-accounts/>

6. Isolation and Loneliness Strategy – Sarah Van Putten – Befriending Network

<https://www.gov.scot/news/tackling-social-isolation-and-loneliness/>

Sarah Van Putten from Befriending Networks sits on the national isolation and loneliness strategy implementation group which was set up after the strategy's launch in December 2018.

The strategy has caught the attention of cross-party support and was debated in Parliament this week.

The strategy highlights that isolation and loneliness can impact anyone at any time, it sets out a vision for Scotland on tackling the growing issue. Befriending has been stated as an option to help support isolation and loneliness of which is driven by volunteers. There is an opportunity to ensure the strategy promotes volunteering as a key driver to tackle isolation and loneliness.

The Convener reiterated how critical it is that this strategy is supported within the voluntary sector and that priority 3 - Create opportunities for people to connect should be a priority for the sector. He also stated that there is a disconnect politically and what is happening on the ground this needs to change to ensure the strategy is delivered effectively.

Gemma Neville- Voluntary Arts Scotland highlighted that active engagement within Arts has had an impact on isolation and loneliness but is not referenced and would like to ask the implementation group to consider this.

A Fairer Scotland for Older People – A framework for action has been published which has strong read across:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-older-people-framework-action/>

7. Volunteers discussing the impact of volunteering on their health and wellbeing (Lynda Craig, Leeann Davidson – Shelter Scotland)

Lynda and Leeann provided an insight into how volunteering had changed their lives, from their mental health to skills development providing opportunities for personal growth and wellbeing.

Leeann is a mental health and wellbeing facilitator with Shelter Scotland, her motivations to volunteer were based on her personal circumstances of continued homelessness, a single mum of four who found the opportunity to go to college and contacted Shelter Scotland as part of a college placement and once that finished decided to continue as a volunteer.

Lynda is a volunteer with Men's shed and found it difficult to gain employment due to a criminal conviction but now through support and confidence gained through volunteering she is now at University and has no intention of giving up volunteering anytime soon.

Both agreed volunteering improved their mental health and helped them gain confidence which empowered them to change their lives for the better.

It was agreed that having volunteer's perspective was invaluable and the CPG members thanked Lynda and Leeann for their contribution and time.

8. Any other Business

Claire Stevens VHS reminded that the VHS conference takes place on 4th May, it's a free event for Third Sector Partners.

Kim Atkinson, Scottish Sports Association also reminded everyone that the CPG on Sport takes place this evening in committee room 5 at 5.30-7.00.

Paul Reddish – Project Scotland indicated that the Year of Young People VIP recommendations will be published in March.

9. Date of next meeting

27th March 2019