

Glasgow Community Planning Partnership

Report by Jill Miller

Email: jill.miller@glasgowlife.org.uk

**GLASGOW'S STRATEGIC VOLUNTEERING UPDATE
COVID – 19 Response**

Purpose of Report:

Present the Glasgow Community Planning Partnership (GCCP) Executive group with an overview of volunteering response to Covid- 19 during lockdown and demonstrate next steps to build on and adapt Glasgow's Volunteering Strategy and action plan 2019-24 as a critical element of Glasgow's economic and social recovery.

Recommendations:

GCCP Executive Group members are asked to:

1. Endorse the proposal for the Volunteering Strategy Governance Group to inform and participate in the city's Recovery Task Force structures.
2. Commit to reviewing the Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan for 2019-24 and volunteering infrastructures in light of Covid-19 response.
3. Confirm their organisation's ongoing participation in the Volunteering Strategy Governance Group.

1. Introduction

People's volunteering* responses to the coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis have been outstanding and have served to illustrate the fundamental importance of people's unpaid contributions to communities and the wider economy not just during the emergency, but always.

*Volunteering refers to both formal i.e. through a third party and informal i.e. helping someone out with an organisation

1.1 Recovery Task Force

The Social Recovery Taskforce will be a vital component of the Councils renewal and recovery programme, which has been established in response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Taskforce will provide leadership and strategic direction and will define and co-ordinate activity to address the societal impact of COVID – 19 beyond recovery. It is envisaged that priorities will be taken forward through existing Community Planning structures and thematic groups, with a strong focus on poverty and disadvantage, equalities and ensuring that those who are disproportionately impacted by COVID - 19 have a clear voice in shaping approaches to recovery.

2. Background

2.1 Volunteering Trends

20% of adults in Glasgow City volunteer formally through an organisation or group (2017/18 NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health and Wellbeing Survey –see *appendix one*). This is below the national average of 26% (Scottish Household Survey 2018) and other comparable Scottish cities. However, it's consistent with the national average rate of volunteering if comparing those living in the first quintile of SIMD data zones and appreciating that a much higher proportion of people in Glasgow live in the first quintile (47% in 2016).

Significant inequalities in formal volunteering rates persist, particularly amongst adults in spite of some considerable achievements in Glasgow programmes particularly amongst young people.

The NHS GGC data suggests that people's volunteering rates in Glasgow have remained steady since 2014/15 whereas they have fallen significantly in Inverclyde, East Dunbartonshire and Renfrewshire (see appendix 1) and across Scotland which saw a 2% decline from 2017 to 2018.

Improved volunteering data and emerging research at both national and local level means we are now better equipped to analyse trends, the impact of direct and indirect policy and practice on individual's motivation and availability to volunteer to inform future planning and resources.

It is even more important now to understand the complexities of these inter-relationships between people's different contributions as we manage our exit from lockdown into the recovery phase and beyond.

Year on year comparison in Glasgow demonstrates both significant progress by Volunteer Glasgow's digital services and an increase in people registering to volunteer during Covid-19 response: in April 2019, there were 5,769 individuals interested in volunteering and 456 opportunity providers registered on Volunteer Glasgow's digital platform but by April 2020, 10,053 individuals and 637 providers had registered.

2.2 Glasgow's Volunteering Infrastructure

Three key agencies operate in Glasgow that have a role in the strategic development of volunteering. Their work ensures that people are encouraged to volunteer, there are more volunteering opportunities and that volunteering opportunities provide a quality experience for the volunteer.

- Volunteer Glasgow; lead on the volunteering strategy, volunteer recruitment and volunteer management
- Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector (GCVS); represent and support the third sector organisations that host the majority of volunteering opportunities
- Glasgow Life; with key responsibility for volunteering for major city events as well as large volunteering programmes supporting culture, learning and sport in the city

Volunteer Glasgow and GCVS are part of Glasgow's "Third Sector Interface" (TSI). The Third Sector Interface in Glasgow also includes Glasgow Third Sector Interface Network and Glasgow Social Enterprise Network. There is a Third Sector Interface in every local authority area in Scotland. Most Third Sector Interfaces in Scotland operate as one organisation, but a minority, including Glasgow, operate as partnerships. The national network of TSIs have the following vision for empowerment and volunteering in the current context:

"Our vision is of a Scotland where each of us are empowered to participate and contribute to a fairer, wellbeing economy in different ways: through properly rewarded paid work but also through a variety of appropriate, unpaid roles - that are often undervalued – including the distinct roles of unpaid (family) care and volunteering. We continue to share the Government's vision of a Scotland "where everyone can volunteer, more often, and throughout their lives" [[Volunteering for All, 2019](#)] and we are therefore determined to work with partners to:

- Maximise the social and economic benefits of people's volunteering responses to the Covid-19 pandemic during the phases of recovery and renewal.
- Help redesign our economy and social systems so that they work for us all and specifically empower more people to volunteer more often."

2.3 Volunteering Strategy Governance Group

First established in 2006 to develop the relevant elements of the Commonwealth Games bid (including legacy plans) the Group is now chaired by Volunteer Glasgow. Members include representatives from most of the community planning partner organisations.

The Community Planning Partnership endorsed [Glasgow's refreshed Volunteering Strategy 2019- 24](#) in March 2019 following a process of wider stakeholder engagement and action planning. The Strategy includes shared objectives, key indicators and an action plan for year 1.

As anticipated, Scottish Government published the [new national framework, "Volunteering for All"](#) in April 2019, identifying five new national volunteering outcomes and their relationship with the national performance framework. A review will ensure that Glasgow's objectives align to the national outcomes. The Government aimed to develop the national framework's *delivery plan* by September 2020 and TSIs have argued that efforts to do so should be redoubled in the light of covid-19. Regardless of the timescales, Glasgow partners should contribute to the process of defining the optimal combination of national and local programmes, investments and interventions for a plan that will maximise outcomes for the city.

3. Covid – 19 Volunteering response

Since March 2020, Glasgow's volunteering environment has shifted;

- Government guidelines have meant the suspension of valuable volunteering programmes
- Many people who regularly volunteer their time cannot due to them/their families falling within vulnerable groups
- The pandemic has generated new grassroots mutual aid groups and encouraged support for neighbours, activating acts of kindness between strangers
- Established Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) have experienced much greater demand than usual, some have suspended services and activities and others have rapidly diversified to meet local emerging covid-19 needs.

3.1 National Volunteer Recruitment Campaign - Scotland Cares

- 4,450 people in Glasgow signed-up to volunteer with local charities in response to the Scotland Cares campaign.
- Volunteer Glasgow contacted all by email with key messages including the option to register on the digital platform to be connected to opportunities with Glasgow based organisations and services.
- See attached report, a data analysis of those registered on Volunteer Glasgow digital platform from March – May 2020.
- Initial comparison with the data of those registering with Volunteer Glasgow between April 2019 and February 2020 reveals that those people responding to Scotland Cares are significantly more likely to live in third, fourth and fifth quintile SIMD data zones.

3.2 Mutual Aid groups

- 30 new Mutual Aid Groups formed (informal neighbourhood response). Number of volunteers unknown, estimated thousands
- Safeguarding advice for VIOs was published by Volunteer Glasgow on 24th March and widely circulated locally and nationally
- Group representative have been invited to attend next Volunteer Strategy Governance Group to capture informal volunteering efforts in city profile

3.3 British Red Cross

- 7,705 people in Greater Glasgow and Clyde registered to volunteer with BRC via Scotland Cares
- 150 volunteers recruited to assist with call handling and deliveries.
- 200 total number of volunteers supporting Covid- 19 response.

4. Our approach

4.1 Principles applied while planning Covid- 19 response:

- Ensure that volunteer recruitment and placement across the city is coordinated in an efficient and effective manner.
- Build capacity within existing frameworks, utilise skills and learned experience to ensure that volunteering activity is safe, meaningful, sustainable and meets citizen's needs.
- Volunteers do not contribute to the further spread Covid - 19 unnecessarily, but instead adhere to social distancing and safeguarding guidelines.

4.2 Volunteer Glasgow objectives for Covid-19 response:

- Ensure as many people as possible that have signed-up to volunteer then go on to register with the city's digital platform at volunteerglasgow.org and are then connected to opportunities in the groups/organisations that need their help.
- Maximise people's ongoing engagement with volunteering (legacy) via the digital platform for both the new normal and renewal/building back better.
- Support third and public sector VIOs with volunteer management best practice (including recruitment, training, support and recognition) and facilitate service, programme and opportunity development.

5. Challenges

Identified challenges faced by VIOs;

- **Supply outweighs demand** – huge volume of individuals registered to help but limited opportunities.
- **Maintaining engagement with existing volunteers** - a large proportion of services suspended and therefore volunteering programmes. Volunteers who state they volunteer for social connectedness are at risk from deteriorating mental health.*
- **Safeguarding** – many organisations have reported that the demands of the evolving public health guidance and regulations were mitigated by the

safeguarding guidance and updates first published by Volunteer Glasgow in March.*

- **Managing volunteers remotely and developing management systems** - for many organisations, moving staff, services and processes (such as volunteer recruitment) online has been a slower and more challenging process than they envisaged although many reported that progress was being made *
- **Reduced staff/ board members** – many organisations have suspended services and the volunteering programmes which help deliver them during lockdown, furloughing volunteer management staff, while others have struggled with staff illness.*
- **Developing new roles** – many organisations which have remained active or open and/or which pivoted to delivering new services for the covid-19 response have tended to mobilise and redeploy existing staff and volunteers rather than recruiting more people for the new roles created. *
- **Reduced funding**, Increased demand for more resources alongside reduced community fundraising and usual income streams.

*Evidenced in Volunteer Glasgow's Report on VG's Engagement with Volunteer Involving Organisations (April/May 2020)

6. Work undertaken to overcome challenges:

6.1 GCVS, Volunteer Glasgow, GCC, Glasgow Life and NHSGCC met to consider volunteering response current and future challenges and solutions leading to the development of an action plan.

6.2 TSI Chief Officers (including Glasgow) met on 19th May to define a strategic statement on empowerment and volunteering for the TSI Network response to Government discussions on recovery and economic renewal (vision statement included above).

6.3 Volunteer Glasgow has provided [online support](#) for both volunteers and organisations for covid-19 since early March and via the Glasgow Helps phone lines. This has included safeguarding guidance, ongoing engagement via large events hosted by GCVS, a survey of 604 VIOs, VIO call rounds and online Volunteer Manager networking events with online training for VIOs planned for June and July.

6.4 The next meeting of the Volunteering Strategy Governance Group is scheduled for the 19th June and will consider:

- Review and recommendations for Covid-19 Volunteering action plan (under development) highlighting current and future challenges, possible solutions and reporting and monitoring data
- Contribute to the city's Recovery Task Force plans
- Reporting and monitoring data relevant to the Volunteering Strategy

7. How We Build Back Better

The COVID-19 outbreak has undoubtedly resulted in a crisis in Glasgow and beyond. Many of the social challenges that we are facing during COVID-19 are not new, the crisis is uncovering inequalities and challenges that already existed in the city and have done for generations including but not limited to; homelessness, poverty, domestic violence, access to food and digital exclusion.

As we begin to exit from lockdown and plan for the future it is a commonly shared view that old ways of working can no longer be tolerated just because they are how we have always done things. There is an opportunity to consider the type of society we want to see, and how volunteering, community and third sector activity can help us achieve this.

In “building back better” we should aspire to maintain and mobilise the community spirit that has been shown by our citizens. To begin this process it is important to review whether our structures for facilitating volunteering and community action are fit for purpose to lead that work.

Conclusion

GCPP Executive Group members are asked to consider challenges Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) are currently facing and commit to working together as a partnership to overcome these. Ensuring volunteering is recognised, valued and contributes to the city’s Recovery Task Force structures while existing infrastructures, strategy and action plans are reviewed and improved to compliment recent volunteering achievements and equip VIOs with the resources to deliver positive and meaningful volunteer experiences.

Appendix 1

Volunteering in Glasgow 2014/15 – 2017/8

Source: NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health and Wellbeing Surveys

Geographic Area *	Volunteer Participation rate			
	2017 / 2018	2014 / 2015	Change	
East Dunbartonshire	20%	25%	-5%	Significantly Worse
Inverclyde	15%	19%	-4%	Significantly Worse
Renfrewshire	10%	21%	-11%	Significantly Worse
Glasgow City	20%	19%	1%	Not Significant
Glasgow City Localities				
<i>Glasgow South</i>	23%	16%	7%	Significantly Better
<i>Glasgow North East</i>	15%	18%	-3%	Significantly Worse
<i>Glasgow North West</i>	22%	24%	-2%	Not Significant
Neighbourhoods				
<i>Govanhill</i>	13%	8%	5%	Significantly Better
<i>Greater Gorbals</i>	17%	10%	7%	Significantly Better
<i>Parkhead/Dalmarnock</i>	12%	10%	2%	Not Significant
<i>Ruchazie/Garthamlock</i>	14%	18%	-4%	Not Significant
<i>Ruchill/Possilpark</i>	15%	15%	0%	Not Significant
Total	18%	20%	-2%	Not Significant
<i>* East Renfrewshire did not boost in 2017/18</i>				
<i>** West Dunbartonshire have never boosted their sample</i>				