

# Is there a need for a national recognition scheme for adults volunteering?

*And if there is, what should it look like?*

Scoping and development work conducted by:

- Volunteer Glasgow, Voluntary Action Scotland and Scotland's Third Sector Interfaces
- Interim Report - December 2017

## ***Why might we need such a scheme?***

Volunteering is the “golden thread”<sup>1</sup> that delivers huge benefits for virtually every aspect of Scottish society: making people healthier and happier, and strengthening our communities (see side panel). The latest research data shows that young people appear to be volunteering significantly more than previously<sup>2</sup>, but for adults, volunteering rates seem to be remaining flat<sup>3</sup>. In an environment where people are interested in volunteering and where multiple needs in communities are growing, what can we do to support more adults volunteering?

Many local volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) have been telling us for some time that there is a need to do more to recognise and celebrate adults volunteering: although they can use Saltire Awards to recognise young people aged 12-25, there is no nationally endorsed recognition scheme for adults (aged 26+). They have told us that national endorsement makes a difference and is clearly perceived to be of more value than anything they themselves as organisations can do alone or with local partners.

Given the success of the Saltire Awards<sup>4</sup> and the likely impact of these in combination with many other initiatives/factors on the very positive increased rates of young people volunteering, the obvious question is whether a national scheme can be designed to make a similar contribution to adult volunteering rates.

*“Looking across the GCPH research and evidence reviews there appear to be a number of ways in which volunteering has been shown to support people’s health and wellbeing.”*  
[\(GCPH, 2016 pp31-33\)](#)

*“Older people who are not working represent a high risk group and while re-employment may not always be possible, interventions [such as volunteering] that can help to decrease loneliness, social isolation and boredom, and improve self-esteem offer valuable opportunities to improve health outcomes and promote successful ageing”.*  
[\(MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow, 2017\)](#)

*“Once you tot up the private benefits of volunteering – well-being, health, skills – something quite striking becomes apparent. The benefits to volunteering might be as large, if not larger, for volunteers themselves as for recipients.”* [\(Andrew Haldane, Chief Economist, Bank of England, 2014, pp12-34\)](#)

<sup>1</sup> Angela Constance MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities - Scottish Government [http://www.parliament.scot/CrossPartyGroups/Session5CrossPartyGroup/Minutes/Volunteering\\_20161116.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/CrossPartyGroups/Session5CrossPartyGroup/Minutes/Volunteering_20161116.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.volunteerscotland.net/policy-and-research/research/young-people-and-volunteering-in-scotland-2016/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.volunteerscotland.net/policy-and-research/data-and-graphs/national-profile/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.vascotland.org/news/saltire-awards-surpasses-100000-milestone>

## ***What have we all done?***

With some extra support from the Big Lottery Fund, we set out to gather a wide range of views on the need for a scheme and to co-design something capable of meeting the needs identified.

- We conducted 3 surveys between March and May 2017 which received 354 responses.
- Agreed an outline proposal, then...
- Designed and facilitated 21 workshops held in June by Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) with a total of 308 people participating across 15 local authority areas.
- We also held a workshop with national VIOs and an update briefing/Q&A with members of the Scottish Volunteering Forum in August.
- A draft of this Report was then discussed in a workshop at the TSIs' national conference in October where participants also answered a series of 5 questions on our next steps...

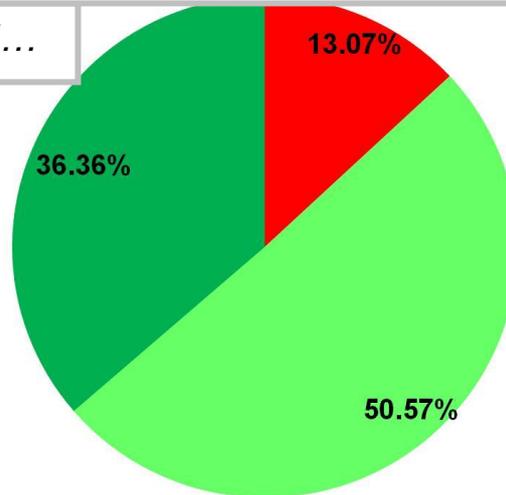


## Key survey findings:

- A substantial majority of survey respondents said there was a need for a national scheme (76% of 29 TSIs, 87% of 180 VIOs and 68% of 145 volunteers).

*Do you think there is a need for a national recognition scheme for volunteers aged 26+?*

VIO's said...



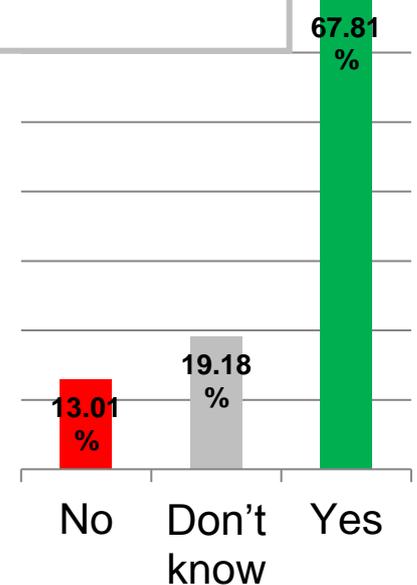
■ Any new national scheme will be of limited value to us and we might not need to use it at all with everything else we already have in place.

■ A new scheme would be a valuable addition to the things we do to recognise our people for their volunteering.

■ A new scheme is an essential development for boosting volunteering, enabling our organisation - and the country as a whole - to best recognise people's contributions.

- People said that a national scheme could offer the following if it was designed to be *flexible, person-centred and efficient*, providing effective *options* that build on (and add value to) those successful, local schemes and individual VIO programmes that already exist:
  - Greater credibility and an increased profile for volunteering and VIOs,
  - A mechanism for encouraging both new volunteers *and* people already involved,
  - Consistency of recognition across age groups,
  - Improved quality of data on volunteering for strategic planning, and
  - Appropriate additional forms of recognition.

Volunteers said...



- Most respondents favoured local, annual events or in-house (VIO) celebrations rather than the option of national events.

**“Although we recognise our volunteers as individuals and do a great deal to make them feel valued, I think a scheme to recognise them more widely would be fantastic. We should be shouting widely about volunteering opportunities and the amazing work all our volunteers do.”**

*3<sup>rd</sup> sector VIO, working with children, families, young people*

### ***Our outline proposal:***

A small steering group of TSIs was convened to shape our outline proposals on the basis of these survey results. We then put the following proposal to the 21 workshops held in June:

- A national, online portal where VIOs can register their volunteers for recognition and order/purchase certificates, thank you cards, badges and/or other suitable tokens of appreciation that can be personalised as appropriate.
- TSIs could choose the appropriate level of promotional activity in their area in the context of any local schemes where those already exist.

### ***In the workshops:***

- Volunteers told us that:
  - Certificates should reflect a person's achievements and the impact made rather than being based solely upon the number of hours undertaken
  - A person-centred approach allows for something more meaningful that can be linked to employability if appropriate.
  - Personalised thank you cards (e.g. available and generated from web portal) would be appreciated far more than generic certificates and help to make volunteers feel valued.
  - Badges could be linked to specific milestones and help volunteers feel more part of the organisation with which they are volunteering.
- VIOs told us that:
  - A self-supporting online portal would be most practical and less resource heavy.
  - A simple, straightforward system (similar to the existing Saltire Awards scheme for 12-25 year olds) would be preferred.
  - Adequate promotion and advertising of the scheme would be necessary to ensure take-up and to attract funding.
  - We should explore linking the scheme with open (digital) badges.
  - Additional resources may be required to allow for a dedicated person within each organisation to coordinate the scheme with admin support for maintaining volunteer info.
- There was little, if any, agreement on the ideas for the name of any scheme at this point, but plenty of suggestions.

## ***What next?***

We will now:

1. Engage in further discussions with key stakeholders on the basis of this report to develop a shared understanding of the relevance of the proposals to national objectives.
2. Map out potential operational processes for/of such a scheme. Bearing in mind the importance of - and value to - TSIs being the main 'entry point'; alongside the need for minimal administrative burden at a local level (in particular for TSIs).
3. Based on this, identify what is needed to set up and maintain such a scheme. Use this to scope out the resources and inputs required to inform discussions with possible funders and supporters.