



Consultation Response

Finance and Public Administration Committee Inquiry into NPF National Outcomes

April 2022



About Us

Volunteer Scotland is Scotland's National Centre for Volunteering. We believe that volunteering should be an enjoyable, rewarding and fulfilling experience for the volunteer; that volunteers have the right to be safe and protected in delivering their volunteering roles; and that to derive health and well-being benefits from volunteering requires regular and meaningful contributions of time.

Should any queries arise from our response, please contact our Policy Officer by emailing **sarah.latto@volunteerscotland.org.uk**

Response

Inquiry Questions

1. To what extent do the National Outcomes shape how your organisation works?

The National Outcomes have a significant impact on Volunteer Scotland's work as our current work plan is mapped to Scotland's Volunteering For All outcomes framework published in early 2019. Volunteer Scotland, as Scotland's national centre for volunteering, has aligned our own strategic outcomes with those detailed in the Volunteering for All framework, which is in itself mapped to the National Outcomes.

2. How do you know which National Outcomes your organisation contributes towards?

The Volunteering for All outcomes framework, which details 5 outcomes related to volunteering, is mapped to 4 of the 11 National Outcomes, namely those related to education, health, communities and poverty. However, recent efforts to develop a corresponding Volunteering Action Plan, due to be published in June this year, have highlighted the complex impact volunteering has in society which reaches well beyond these 4 National Outcomes.

Volunteer Scotland has led the development of the Volunteering Action Plan, in partnership with the Third Sector Unit of the Scottish Government and co-produced with over 130 key stakeholders. The Human Learning Systems approach adopted for this demonstrated that volunteering contributes to all of the National Outcomes in some form. As such, the Volunteering Action Plan has a vital role in asserting the relevance of volunteering to a broad range of policy areas

Volunteers across the country in organisations like TCV and Paths for All are supporting efforts to protect and enhance our environment, including protection from the impact of climate change. Recent events in Ukraine have also seen an outpouring of support from volunteers in communities across the country to support Ukrainian citizens, contributing to our positive contribution internationally. We also know of volunteers in many organisations, like the Scottish Refugee Council and LGBT Youth Scotland, who protect and uphold people's human rights.

As such, Volunteer Scotland supports activity which contributes towards all 11 of the national Outcomes and will have a key role following the publication of the Volunteering Action Plan in ensuring that volunteering is better reflected in relevant policy.

3. How do you demonstrate this to your organisation and more widely to others?

Our work plan, including our strategic outcomes, are shared with our team and with our stakeholders on our website. We have also been instrumental in shaping the upcoming Volunteering Action Plan to ensure that the entirety of volunteering impact in Scotland is reflected.

In terms of sharing the impact of volunteering, Volunteer Scotland's research and evaluation team produces significant evidence related to the prevalence and impact of volunteering in Scotland. This includes thematic research, for example on the impact of volunteering on health and wellbeing and volunteer participation among young people. We also undertake analysis of volunteer participation in Scotland based on national datasets such as the Scottish Household Survey. Finally, we hosted four 'evidence clinics' on 4 key themes to support the co-production of the Volunteering Action Plan.

In addition, the team regularly partners with other academic and research institutions to further increase evidence of the significant impact volunteering makes, including a significant UK-wide research project over the past 2 years to explore the role of volunteers during the pandemic. All of this research evidence is published on our website and is regularly shared with relevant audiences at internal and external events.

We have recently engaged a Policy officer to ensure that the contribution of volunteering to the National Outcomes is better reflected within policy.

4. How empowered is your organisation to do something different (should it wish) to achieve the National Outcomes relevant to you?

Volunteer Scotland is largely funded by the Scottish Government to support volunteering in Scotland, and the publication of the Volunteering for All outcomes framework has provided increased clarity regarding our organisational priorities. Given the level of ambition shown in the outcomes framework, and indeed in the upcoming Volunteering Action Plan, we feel sufficiently empowered to look at different approaches which will help us to achieve our outcomes, which are mapped to the National Outcomes.

5. How is your organisation held to account for how your actions and decisions impact on the National Outcomes?

Volunteer Scotland submits annual reports to the Scottish Government demonstrating our progress against our organisational outcomes, which are mapped to the Volunteering for All outcomes framework and engage with colleagues in the Third Sector Unit regularly.

Our board of directors reflects a wide cross-section of our key stakeholders, particularly organisations that involve volunteers, who hold our operational team to account.

We recently undertook a comprehensive survey to assess the extent to which we are meeting the expectations of our key stakeholders. The results of this survey, which only closed this week, will inform our next work plan.

6. How are the National Outcomes reflected in everyday decision taking?

Given our significant involvement in the development of the Volunteering Action Plan, and our core purpose of supporting individuals and organisations to make a difference through volunteering, the National Outcomes are reflected in a considerable number of our everyday decisions albeit in an indirect way.

7. When it comes to spending priorities or providing funding to others, what role do the National Outcomes play?

Volunteer Scotland's spending is informed by our strategic priorities which reflect the Volunteering for All outcomes framework. As this framework is mapped to the National Outcomes, they play a significant role in determining how we will spend our money.

However, the Volunteering for All outcomes framework does not reflect the totality of the impact of volunteering in achieving the National Outcomes. As the national centre for volunteering, Volunteer Scotland works to ensure that we make best use of our income to ensure that volunteering in all its forms is supported and recognised.

8. To what extent is any public sector funding you receive contingent upon demonstrating your contribution to delivery of the National Outcomes?

The link between our public sector funding and the National Outcomes has become more tangible since the publication of the Volunteering for All outcomes framework in 2019 and will become even more so with the publication of the upcoming Volunteering Action Plan. These two documents have had a pivotal role in asserting the relevance of volunteering in the policy landscape.

9. Where do the National Outcomes sit within the range of priorities and demands on your organisation?

Given that Volunteer Scotland is primarily a government funded body and given the considerable impact and relevance of volunteering across many policy areas, the National Outcomes feature strongly in our organisational priorities. The publication of the Volunteering for All outcomes framework and the upcoming

launch of our Volunteering Action Plan, which together will inform the majority of our organisational priorities going forward, provide a clear indication of the contribution volunteer makes in achieving the national Outcomes.

10. To what extent do you work collaboratively with other organisations in delivering the National Outcomes relevant to you?

Volunteer Scotland prioritises partnership working and actively engages with a range of other organisations and bodies to promote and increase the impact of volunteering in Scotland. This has been particularly prevalent in the past 18 months as we work towards finalising the Volunteering Action Plan which has been co-produced with 130+ organisations.

11. Please share any examples of good practice, areas for improvement or practices that have not worked so well

The development of the Volunteering Action Plan represents an example of good practice in ensuring that the strategic value of volunteering across all National Outcome areas is acknowledged. Volunteering was celebrated as the 'golden thread' in our communities by Angela Constance, then Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, in 2016. However, in reality, volunteering often remains the invisible thread because it is not represented in relevant policy. The Volunteering Action Plan provides an opportunity to ensure that this strategic significance is better realised.

One area where the strategic significance of volunteering has been realised is in the response to social isolation and loneliness in Scotland. The percentage of adults feeling lonely represents one of the indicators for the Communities National Outcome. A Connected Scotland, the 2018 strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness, was co-produced by a wide-ranging group of partners and acknowledges the key role of volunteering in responding to this issue. Indeed, Priority 3 – Create opportunities for people to connect – references the importance of befriending in tackling social isolation and loneliness and highlights the value of volunteering in promoting connection and wellbeing.

Overt recognition of volunteering's strategic importance in this document is to be celebrated but is only the tip of the iceberg. Our research highlights the considerable impact of volunteering on health and wellbeing, community connection and youth participation, for example, but volunteering remains under-represented in policy. It is our hope that the Volunteering Action Plan will pave the way for the contribution of volunteering to all of our National Outcomes to be better represented in policy.



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