



Consultation Response

Human Rights Bill

October 2023



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.

This response was developed following consultation with the Volunteering Action Plan Policy Champions Network (PCN). Volunteer Scotland facilitated a consultation event with 14 PCN members on 12th September 2023.

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

Consultation Response

Introduction

Volunteers are often on the frontline of services which promote and uphold rights, including in the provision of advice and advocacy. In addition, participation in volunteering has an important role in maximising the human rights of Scotland's people, particularly for those from our most marginalised communities.

Our response to the Human Rights Bill consultation explores the important role of volunteers and volunteering to the rights agenda in Scotland. It also explores some of the potential barriers faced by volunteers and volunteer involving organisations in meaningfully engaging in this work. Finally, it provides a number of recommendations to ensure that the role of volunteers and volunteering is reflected in the Human Rights Bill.

Questions

2. What are your views on our proposal to allow for dignity to be a key threshold for defining the content of MCOs?

We agree that dignity should be a key threshold for defining the content of Minimum Core Obligations (MCOs). Striving for dignity in the design and delivery of public services sets a standard that is beyond the bare minimum and reflects the importance of providing services that are person-centred and empowering.

Dignity and volunteering go hand in hand. Volunteer-led services often respond to gaps in statutory delivery and are by nature person-centred and focussed on prevention. They are usually motivated by compassion and kindness and thus hold dignity at their core.

One example of a volunteer-led service that promotes dignity is [The Food Train](#) who engage volunteers in the delivery of shopping and cooked meals, allowing people with additional needs to stay in their homes and communities. Similarly, [Kirrie Connections](#), an Aberdeenshire based dementia hub, engages volunteers in a range of services to support individuals with dementia and their carers, helping to ensure that they have control and dignity whilst living with dementia.

Allowing for dignity to be a key threshold for defining Minimum Core Obligations would help to ensure that the strategic importance of services provided by volunteers

is better reflected in both policy and public sector procurement of volunteer led services.

Participation in volunteering is also aligned with upholding dignity, with significant evidence that volunteering increases self-esteem, resilience, and feelings of connectedness with the community. In our [2018 research](#) exploring the health and wellbeing benefits of volunteering, it was found that participation in voluntary activity helps older people to maintain their functional independence, and increases an individual's ability to cope with illness. It also helps to protect against loneliness and social isolation by building social capital and promoting local service delivery. The research also found that the benefits of volunteering increase disproportionately for those 'susceptible to exclusion in society' such as those with mental health conditions, the long term unemployed and those in deprived communities.

The benefits of volunteering are perhaps most acute for asylum seekers and refugees. Indeed, a recent [evaluation of the Scottish Government's Refugee Integration Strategy](#) found that the majority of refugees and asylum seekers interviewed for the evaluation had been involved in volunteering, and that this helped them to counter boredom, to socialise, to give something back and to build their confidence speaking English. It was also reported that volunteering 'helped their mental health and reduced the isolating effects of not being able to have paid employment.' It is clear from this report that volunteering provides refugees and asylum seekers with a degree of agency, empowerment and dignity in otherwise challenging circumstances.

Despite these clear benefits, particularly for more marginalised groups, volunteering is not accessible for all. The most recent [Scottish Household Survey results](#) found that those most likely to benefit from volunteering are in fact least likely to participate. In 2021, 33% of adults living in the least deprived areas (SIMD Quintile 5) had volunteered, compared with 21% of those living in the most deprived areas (SIMD Quintile 1). Similarly, disabled adults were less likely to volunteer than non-disabled adults (23% compared with 29%) and people who identified as 'White: Other British' were most likely to volunteer with a 34% participation rate (compared with a 26% participation rate for minority ethnic groups).

It is clear that many people, particularly those from marginalised groups, face significant barriers to volunteering. This has been exacerbated by the cost of living crisis, as detailed in our [Testing our Resilience report](#) published last year and our subsequent Cost of Living [quarterly bulletins](#). Similarly, the aforementioned evaluation of the government's Refugee Integration Strategy found that 'volunteering was not always possible [for refugees and asylum seekers] due to the cost of transport, caring responsibilities or ill health'.

Allowing for dignity to be a key threshold for defining Minimum Core Obligations would help to ensure that activities that promote dignity, such as volunteering, would be prioritised when making decisions or allocating funding. It would also support further investment in Scotland's [Volunteering Action Plan](#), published last year, which identifies a range of actions to address common barriers and promote participation.

13. How can we best embed participation in the framework of the Bill?

To embed participation in the framework of the Bill, and in subsequent policy/decision-making related to human rights, it is vital to acknowledge the key enablers and barriers of participation at both a local and national level. Volunteers have a key role in facilitating participation in decision-making.

The role of volunteers in participation is particularly prevalent at a local level, with volunteer-led Community Councils being a primary driver of local democracy. A recent [SPICe briefing](#) explored the important role of Community Councils, and described them as 'the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland'. Similarly, Community Learning and Development (CLD) has an important role in enabling local participation and, according to the [CLD Standards Council](#), is largely reliant on the support of volunteers to 'build the confidence of community members to make a difference in their neighbourhoods'.

Many of the bodies that represent communities of interest or experience are reliant on people with lived experience giving their time to inform decision-making. The Who Cares? Scotland [Empowered Voices Training Programme](#) builds the capacity of Care Experienced people to use their voice to bring about change. Previous members of this training programme have become members of the Scottish Youth Parliament and co-chairs of the Independent Care Review. For people with lived experience to participate in decision-making, dedicated resource is often required to build their capacity and provide support where sharing their experience is mentally challenging or potentially re-traumatising.

Given the clear relationship between volunteering and participation in decision-making, the afore-mentioned barriers to volunteering for people from marginalised groups will likely lead to issues with meaningful representation. The [Scottish Household Survey data from 2020](#) shows that adults from Scotland's most deprived communities are almost half as likely to volunteer in activities related to their local community or neighbourhood than those in the least deprived communities. These barriers to volunteering are likely to be reflected in participation in decision-making and, therefore, in representation.

Scotland's [Volunteering Action Plan](#) identifies 47 actions to 'widen access to volunteering by understanding and reducing the barriers to participation'. It also pledges to 'listen to volunteers by ensuring that the volunteer 'voice' is heard and that volunteers help make the decisions that affect them'. **The Government can embed participation in the framework of the Bill by ensuring that the actions detailed in the Volunteering Action Plan to widen access to participation are reflected.**

In addition, the capacity of representative bodies in the third sector, and indeed the capacity of volunteers, has been significantly diminished as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis. The most recent [Third Sector Tracker](#), developed by SCVO and the Scottish Government, has found that 94% of third sector organisations experienced rising costs, and 63% reported increased demand for their services over the period. In addition to this, 34% rated 'volunteer shortages' as one of their top 3 challenges.

Our [research](#) exploring the impact of the cost of living crisis on volunteering also detailed the reasons why many organisations are experiencing volunteer shortages. It found that many individuals are experiencing practical barriers to volunteering, such as the need to work longer hours or not being able to afford travel expenses, as well as worsening mental health and wellbeing or increased apathy in the face of the current perceived state of 'permacrisis'.

Meaningful and representative participation requires dedicated resource to build capacity and provide ongoing support, and this is particularly pertinent in the current climate. **To ensure adequate representation and engagement, dedicated resource is required for representative bodies who build the capacity of individuals with lived experience to participate. Dedicated resource is also required to address structural barriers to participation in both volunteering and decision-making.**

14. What are your views on the proposed approach to including an equality provision to ensure everyone is able to access rights, in the Bill?

We agree with the equality provision in principle but have concerns at the burden this could place on duty-holders given the complex nature of structural discrimination.

As previously stated, there is a significant challenge in volunteering at present regarding equality. Many of the barriers volunteers face are multi-faceted in nature, and would be challenging for individual organisations to overcome. As detailed in our response to question 24, we believe that volunteering is a quintessential part of cultural life in Scotland. It is part of the fabric of society, it is a key driver for

community connection and for supporting human dignity. As such, volunteering could be classed as one of the Minimum Core Obligations for the right to participate in cultural life. Similarly, volunteering has significant proven health and wellbeing benefits which could support its inclusion as an MCO for the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

However, it is almost impossible for volunteer involving organisations to guarantee that anybody can participate in volunteering due to the structural nature of the barriers that exist. For example, the [lack of clarity regarding how participation in volunteering could impact the outcome of Work Capability Assessments](#) means that many people in receipt of certain benefits feel unable to volunteer, despite the best efforts of many volunteer involving organisations to make opportunities accessible to those with disabilities or long term health conditions.

In another instance, some volunteer involving organisations have reported difficulty ensuring certain volunteer groups are fully insured, thus creating an additional barrier to volunteering. One member of our Policy Champions Network has reported a particular challenge purchasing personal accident insurance products for individuals aged under 16 or over 85, meaning that those volunteers are not covered for certain accidents. As such, they feel forced to apply age limits for volunteering, inadvertently discriminating against people because of their age.

Similarly, there was some concern in our recent [Policy Champions Network](#) consultation event that Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs), in their role promoting volunteering and supporting individuals to find volunteering opportunities, might be held accountable for equal access to volunteering when their ability to influence is often limited. One attendee, who works for a TSI, stated that:

“I think the only role we would possibly have to play at local authority level is in terms of understanding maybe the extent to which people aren't able to volunteer because there's insufficient opportunities, maybe in certain types of opportunities or areas or sectors.”

As such, we believe that the equality provision is too simplistic. Any approach to equality, particularly where duty-bearers are held accountable, needs to acknowledge the complex, often structural barriers facing many groups and the differing roles that services will have in identifying and addressing these. Many organisations might have a key role in flagging potential barriers to rights but should not be held wholly responsible for addressing them.

Several attendees of our consultation event spoke about the value of Equality Impact Assessments for organisations delivering public services to report on duties related to equality. **A good first step would be to require duty bearers, or any organisation providing public services, to complete and submit Equality**

Impact Assessments which identify potential barriers for the inclusion of particular groups. This would allow greater understanding of the existing structural barriers for a more coordinated response.

19. What is your view on who the duties in the Bill should apply to?

As stated previously, volunteer-led services are strongly engaged in the upholding of human rights and ensuring dignity. In many instances, volunteer-involving organisations receive public funding to deliver such services. We believe that any organisation in receipt of public money should be held accountable, but we have significant concerns about what the duties in the Bill could mean for volunteers and voluntary organisations.

In our recent Policy Champions Network consultation event regarding the Human Rights Bill, one attendee observed that the relationship between volunteer-led services and rights is often not recognised. They stated that:

“I think most voluntary sector or third sector organisations will be involved in human rights in some way, but the big issue that I have in general when I talk to organisations and volunteers is that they often see their work, because they're on the ground, as human rights work.”

Building on this theme, another attendee at the event stated that:

“We need to also make sure that we don't scare volunteers by putting it all on them because we all know there's a crisis in the amount of volunteers we get in and if we start doing all this, we're going to end up losing even more.”

This response is referring to the evidence of a decline in volunteer participation and a decrease in the satisfaction of people who do volunteer as a result of Covid-19 and the ongoing cost of living crisis. Whilst the most recent Scottish Household Survey data is from 2021, the [2021-22 Community Life Survey](#) for England shows a notable drop in regular volunteering to 16% of the population, compared with 23% in 2019/20. In addition, the most recent [2023 Time Well Spent research](#) by NCVO showed that overall volunteer satisfaction has dropped since 2019 (96% to 92%). It also showed a significant increase in the percentage of volunteers who think their volunteering is becoming too much like paid work (19% to 26%).

Volunteer involving organisations, particularly those in the voluntary sector, are also facing significant challenges at present, with a perfect storm of rising demand for services, increasing costs and stagnating income. Indeed, there are [growing demands in the voluntary sector](#) for the government to implement Fair Funding

arrangements following the most recent Programme for Government. As a result, the capacity of both volunteers and volunteer involving organisations to embrace and embed additional human rights duties is likely to be severely limited.

In addition, there are practical challenges in applying human rights duties to the voluntary sector due to the dispersed and diverse nature of the sector. The most recent SCVO Sector Stats showed that there are over 46,000 voluntary organisations in Scotland, and 41% of these organisations received some funding from the public sector. Such organisations vary from small volunteer-led community organisations with annual incomes of less than £10,000, to much larger organisations with annual incomes of over £10 million. Applying uniform duties to the voluntary sector around human rights would be challenging due to the size and complexity of the sector.

Given the ongoing funding challenges in the voluntary sector, the sector's complexity, and the existence of services in receipt of public funds that are entirely volunteer-run, we feel it is most appropriate to apply the majority of human rights duties to those bodies responsible for allocating resource for rights based services.

We would further recommend a tiered approach to the application of duties to service providers, based on organisation size and the amount of public sector income. This would protect volunteer-led services from being subjected to disproportionate levels of responsibility and scrutiny related to human rights.

20. What is your view on the proposed initial procedural duty intended to embed rights in decision making?

We agree that it is important to ensure a 'bedding in' period for the legislation and the initial procedural duty will help organisations to take necessary actions for embedding a human rights culture.

However, it is vital that there is clarity regarding who the initial procedural duty applies to and how long for. It is also vital that this duty identifies the need for public sector bodies to allocate additional resources for funded organisations to fully embed human rights requirements, and to commit to [Fair Funding practices](#).

As stated previously, there are growing calls within the voluntary sector for Fair Funding arrangements. Without a strong commitment for Fair Funding in the initial procedural duty, it will be challenging for the sector to adequately embed a rights-based approach to service delivery.

21. What is your view on the proposed duty to comply?

We agree with the proposed duty to comply in principle but, as stated in our previous answer, further clarity is required on who this duty applies to and when it will be implemented after the legislation comes into force.

Again, it is also vital that the duty to comply identifies the need for public sector bodies to allocate additional resource for funded organisations to comply with human rights requirements, and to commit to Fair Funding practices.

22. Do you think certain public authorities should be required to report on what actions they are planning to take, and what actions they have taken, to meet the duties set out in the Bill?

Yes, we believe it is important that public authorities are required to report on what actions they are both planning to take and have taken to meet the duties. This is vital to ensure adequate accountability and transparency. However, it is important that clear standards are set for public authorities that they can report against.

In particular, there is a need for greater clarity in how public sector bodies engage with and procure the services of third sector organisations, including those that engage volunteers as part of their service delivery. Unlike paid staff, volunteers do not have the same protections with regards to discrimination and are vulnerable to exploitation. Whilst many barriers to volunteering are structural, there are many discriminatory practices that can be more easily addressed, such as resource for adaptive technologies and payment of out of pocket expenses. On our [volunteering opportunities site](#) on the 18th September 2023, 48% of opportunities did not advertise that they will pay out of pocket expenses. Similarly, 29% did not advertise that they have disabled access, and only 0.009% advertised support with childcare.

Given that volunteers are not afforded the same level of protection as paid employees and do not enter a contractual relationship with the organisations they support, it is important that their rights are protected in other ways. Volunteer Scotland and the Third Sector Interface network advise volunteer involving organisations on best practice related to inclusion, including the option of two quality standards – [Investing in Volunteers](#) and [Volunteer Friendly](#). However, given the funding challenges facing many third sector organisations recently, it appears that resource to support volunteers is being deprioritised by some organisations.

As detailed previously, overall volunteer satisfaction has declined and an increasing number of volunteers feel that their roles are becoming too much like paid work. At our [AGM last November](#), members in attendance were polled on whether their

organisation had been asked to provide volunteering roles which replace some or all of the work of paid staff, or change volunteer roles to include tasks undertaken by paid staff. Of the 67 respondents, 13% responded with 'yes', and a further 25% said that it was a possibility in the future. In a more recent survey of Third Sector Interface Chief Executive Officers published last month, 18.5% responded 'yes' to being asked if they are aware of organisations being asked to provide volunteering roles which replace the work of paid staff, and 67% responded 'no, but possibly in the future'. We believe this is consequence of the financial challenges facing many voluntary organisations at the moment.

Volunteer Scotland and the Scottish Trades Union Congress developed the [Volunteer Charter](#) to help ensure that volunteering is meaningful, sustainable and fair. It sets out 10 principles for assuring legitimacy and preventing exploitation, including 'volunteers and paid workers should be able to carry out their duties in safe, secure and healthy environments that are free from harassment, intimidation, bullying, violence and discrimination' and 'volunteers should not carry out duties formerly carried out by paid workers, nor should they be used to disguise the effects of non-filled vacancies or cuts in services.'

In order to ensure that the rights of volunteers are protected and that they are not being exploited, particularly, when delivering rights-based services, we recommend that public authorities should be required to report on their sustainable engagement with, and procurement of, voluntary sector services.

We also recommend that they should be asked to report on how they are ensuring the rights of volunteers are being protected, in line with the Volunteer Charter.

24. What are your views on the need to demonstrate compliance with economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the right to a healthy environment, via MCOs and progressive realisation?

Economic, social and cultural rights are broad in nature, and are therefore open to interpretation. As such, we believe that MCOs are vital for clarifying what the rights mean in practice, how they apply and who is responsible for upholding them. We also believe that a principle of progressive realisation is a realistic approach which acknowledges that many rights will be embedded over time.

Demonstrating compliance through MCOs helps to ensure that a range of activities which support the upholding of rights can be acknowledged. We have already stated our belief that volunteering should be considered an MCO for the right to participate in cultural life. The significance of volunteering to Scotland's cultural life was best

demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic, when [64% of Scotland's adult population](#) volunteered either formally or informally during 2020. In 2018, volunteers contributed over [360 million hours](#) of their time, and it is estimated that the value of volunteering to Scotland's economy is [£5.5 billion](#).

It can also be demonstrated in the number of services and events that are led entirely by volunteers, particularly in community settings. The [Pittenweem Arts Festival](#) in Fife is a fantastic example of such an event, as the longest running and largest community-based visual arts festival in Scotland. The festival is organised by a committee of volunteers and 'depends' on volunteers for a range of other tasks year round. This festival brings approximately [20,000 people](#) to the East Neuk of Fife each year, having an important impact on the local economy.

The recognition of volunteering as a Minimum Core Obligation for the right to participate in cultural life would reinforce the strategic significance of volunteering in Scottish society and help to ensure that dedicated resource is allocated for guaranteeing that volunteering is accessible to all.

We also believe that the proven health and wellbeing benefits of volunteering participation, as detailed previously, support its inclusion as an MCO for the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. This would, again, reinforce the strategic importance of volunteering in the treatment of many health issues.

One proven vehicle for promoting volunteering as a health and wellbeing activity is social prescribing. The Public Health Scotland [social prescribing for mental health guidance paper](#) acknowledges volunteering as one example of a 'community based service which addresses risk factors for mental health'. Whilst social prescribing can be undertaken by a range of workers in health and social care settings, the Community Link Worker (CLW) model is well established. Voluntary Health Scotland facilitates the Scottish Community Link Worker Network. In May 2023 they published a [briefing paper](#) detailing the challenges in the delivery of CLW programmes, including funding insecurity. It stated that:

'[Short term funding] served both an existential threat to the future of programmes, and the livelihoods of those working in it, and was identified as having an impact on the delivery of link worker services. Uncertainty over future funding was cited as a significant contributing factor to the reticence of some primary care practices to engage with link worker programmes.'

The recognition of a range of social or community-based measures, including volunteering, as MCOs for the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health would ensure that Community Link Worker programmes in Scotland

are viewed as an important driver for demonstrating compliance with human rights duties.

26. What is your view on the proposed duty to publish a Human Rights Scheme?

We agree with the proposed duty to publish a Human Rights Scheme for ensuring ministerial accountability regarding the Bill. Implementing the Bill will require significant additional resource, particularly for those organisations that work on the frontline. Such resource requirements cannot be fully absorbed by public sector bodies and frontline organisations, particularly in the current financial climate. The duty to publish a Human Rights Scheme will help to ensure that government ministers are held accountable for allocating resource to support action around rights.

27. What are your views on the most effective ways of supporting advocacy and/or advice services to help rightsholders realise their rights under the Bill?

Volunteers are often on the frontline in the delivery of advocacy and advice services. In [2020](#), 13% of Scotland's adult volunteers provided advice, support or advocacy, which equates to over 153,000 people.

Citizen's Advice Bureaux are perhaps the most well-known service providing advice services around human rights. In the year [2022-23](#) they helped over 183,000 people with their rights related to issues such as benefits, debt and employment. They involve over [1500 volunteers](#) in the provision of advice in 250 community locations, and the value of volunteers hours annually is estimated to be £8.2 million. In [2022-23](#), they experienced a significant increase in demand for advice as a result of the ongoing cost of living crisis.

[Who Cares? Scotland](#) engage volunteers in the delivery of advocacy services, particularly through their helpline. In 2021-22, 67% of Who Cares? members said that helpline volunteers helped them to understand what support they could get. In a case study exploring the impact of helpline support, one member was helped by an advocate to access their childhood care records. He said:

"They have been so helpful. I thought I had no chance of getting my files."

One form of volunteering that is often overlooked but has a key role in the provision of both advocacy and rights is volunteering for a trade union as a workplace representative or steward. According to [UNISON](#):

‘Our volunteer workplace reps play a vital day-to-day role in helping UNISON members... They are advisers and sounding boards, talking to members about workplace problems and – if they feel confident – giving advice on how to deal with these... They are representatives and spokespersons for members in their workplace.’

Dedicated volunteer roles are also recruited within unions to make sure people are treated fairly at work and do not suffer from discrimination, therefore upholding their rights as employees.

As such, dedicated training for a volunteer audience is required to embed human rights legislation into rights and advocacy services. Volunteers often give their time over and above their other commitments, such as paid work, childcare or caring. Often, volunteers will not have a ‘work’ email address or may not have access to internal IT systems or intranets. This can make communication and training more challenging. Volunteers may also only have a specific day/time that they are available to volunteer, making attending training or events more difficult. As a result of this, the approach to volunteer training and communication must be tailored to their specific circumstances and needs.

Given the contribution of volunteers to the provision of advice and advocacy services, it is vital that the resource supporting this work is sufficient to ensure that volunteers have the training and support required.

38. What are your views on our proposals for bringing the legislation into force?

We are largely in support of the phased approach for bringing the legislation into force. Our only slight concern is the recommendation from the Lived Experience Board to move forward quickly. Whilst we fully appreciate their rationale for this given the current challenges presented by the cost of living crisis, it is vital to also reflect on the impact of the cost of living crisis on frontline services. As reported previously, many voluntary organisations are experiencing unprecedented demand for their services at present, coupled with increasing costs and stagnating income. Similarly, we have also reported that the crisis has had an impact on the capacity of individuals to consider or sustain volunteering, leading to volunteer shortages.

If the government wishes to move at pace in implementing this legislation, additional resource would be required for volunteer involving organisations and volunteers to meaningfully engage with the human rights agenda.

39. What are your views on our proposals to establish Minimum Core Obligations through a participatory process?

We agree that Minimum Core Obligations should be established through a participatory process. This is vital to ensure that the many ways that the rights can be interpreted, and the many different barriers to rights, are considered.

However, we would refer again to our answer to question 13 detailing the barriers to participation that currently exist. Given these barriers, meaningful representation will be challenging. It is vital that the participatory process adopted acknowledges and addresses these challenges.

Again, to ensure adequate representation and engagement, dedicated resource is required for representative bodies who build the capacity of individuals with lived experience to participate. Dedicated resource is also required to address structural barriers to participation in both volunteering and decision-making.

42. How can the Scottish Government and partners effectively build capacity across the public sector to ensure the rights in the Bill are delivered?

As detailed previously, many public sector services are delivered by voluntary organisations, often with the involvement of volunteers. **In order to ensure that capacity is built to deliver such services, we would recommend the following:**

- **Additional dedicated resource for voluntary sector organisations funded to deliver rights based services.**
- **Commitment to Fair Funding principles when engaging the voluntary sector in the delivery of public services. We are in full agreement with [SCVO's Fair Funding calls](#), which include longer-term funding of three years or more and sustainable funding that includes inflation-based uplifts and full costs, including core operating costs.**
- **Inclusion of the [Volunteer Charter](#) principles in procurement standards for rights-based activity to protect the rights of volunteers.**
- **Alignment with the [Volunteering Action Plan](#), which aims to address barriers to volunteering and increase participation.**

43. How can the Scottish Government and partners provide effective information and raise awareness of the rights for rights-holders?

Given that volunteers often act as community representatives or are on the frontline of service delivery related to rights, **we would recommend the development of dedicated training resources that are tailored to the volunteer audience.** These would need to acknowledge the specific needs and requirements of volunteers as a distinct audience from the paid workforce.

As detailed previously, many organisations in the voluntary sector engage volunteers with lived experience to ensure services are representative of the communities they seek to serve. **Engagement specifically with such representative groups when designing assets for effective information and awareness-raising will help to ensure that they are reflective of a range of audiences.**

Summary of Recommendations

Having considered the Human Rights Bill consultation document, we make the following recommendations:

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- ensure that the actions detailed in the Volunteering Action Plan to widen access to participation are reflected in the Bill.
- to require duty bearers, or any organisation providing public services, to complete and submit Equality Impact Assessments which identify potential barriers for the inclusion of particular groups.
- to apply the majority of human rights duties to those bodies responsible for allocating resource for rights based services.
- a tiered approach to the application of duties to service providers, based on organisation size and the amount of public sector income.
- that there is clarity regarding who the initial procedural duty applies to and how long for.
- that the initial procedural duty, and the duty to comply, identify the need for public sector bodies to allocate additional resource for funded organisations to comply with human rights requirements, and to commit to Fair Funding practices.
- that public authorities should be required to report on their sustainable engagement with, and procurement of, voluntary sector services and on how they are ensuring the rights of volunteers are being protected, in line with the Volunteer Charter.
- dedicated resource for representative bodies who build the capacity of individuals with lived experience to participate in decision-making.
- Dedicated resource to address structural barriers to participation in both volunteering and decision-making.
- Additional dedicated resource for voluntary sector organisations funded to deliver rights based services.

- Commitment to Fair Funding principles when engaging the voluntary sector in the delivery of public services. We are in full agreement with SCVO's Fair Funding calls, which include longer-term funding of three years or more and sustainable funding that includes inflation-based uplifts and full costs, including core operating costs.
- Inclusion of the Volunteer Charter principles in procurement standards for rights-based activity to protect the rights of volunteers.
- Alignment with the Volunteering Action Plan, which aims to address barriers to volunteering and increase participation.
- the development of dedicated training resources around the delivery of rights-based services that are tailored to the volunteer audience
- Engage with representative groups, and their volunteers with lived experience, when designing assets for effective information and awareness-raising to ensure that they are reflective of a range of audiences.



Volunteer Scotland
Jubilee House, Forthside Way, Stirling FK8 1QZ
T: 01786 479593 E: hello@volunteerscotland.org.uk
W: volunteerscotland.net



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