Scotland's Volunteer Development Network: Steering group Terms of Reference

1. Purpose of group

The Scotland's Volunteer Development Network (SVDN) Steering Group provides member-led strategic direction for the Network. It ensures that the Network's priorities and activities reflect members' needs while operating within the governance, resources and organisational responsibilities held by Volunteer Scotland (VS).

2. Context and rationale

SVDN is being developed by VS to connect and support people across Scotland who organise, coordinate, support or manage volunteers. It is open to people undertaking this work in paid or voluntary roles and in different sectors.

The Network is being developed in response to findings from the **Bridging the Participation Gap report**, which drew on roundtable discussions involving more than 180 stakeholders across Scotland's third sector. The report found that volunteer managers often lack the resources they need and highlighted the need for more opportunities to network, share knowledge and access peer support.

The Network will provide opportunities for peer support, shared learning, professional development and collaboration, helping members strengthen their practice and contribute to the wider development of volunteer management in Scotland.

SVDN will build on VS's existing membership offer. VS membership will remain free, with access to the Network available as an optional additional benefit. SVDN membership will be free for people who manage volunteers in a voluntary capacity, while those who do so in a paid role will pay a small annual fee.

Steering Group members will receive complimentary SVDN membership for the duration of their appointment, regardless of whether they manage volunteers in a paid or voluntary capacity.

3. Remit

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The Steering Group's remit defines the areas where it can influence and guide the Network's development, and the responsibilities that remain with VS.

3.1. In scope

- Agreeing member-informed priorities for the Network.
- Providing input and recommendations on the Network's development and future direction.

3.2. Out of scope

- Direct responsibility for the Network's budget, staffing, resources or operational delivery.
- Making financial or contractual commitments or appointing staff.
- Decisions about VS' wider organisational strategy, policies or governance.

4. Objectives

The Steering Group will:

- **Shape the Network's direction**: Identify and agree priorities informed by members' feedback and emerging challenges.
- **Strengthen the Network's offer**: Help develop and review opportunities for peer support, learning, professional development and collaboration.
- **Represent members**: Bring members' perspectives into the Network's development, reflecting a range of sectors, roles and organisational contexts.
- **Champion good practice**: Encourage the sharing of knowledge and resources about inclusive volunteer management.
- **Review progress**: Consider member engagement and the Network's impact to inform future priorities and support its sustainability.

5. Values

The Steering Group will model and promote the following values in its work:

- **Member-led and responsive**: Members' needs and priorities shape the Network and its activities.
- **Inclusive and accessible**: The Network welcomes people with different experiences and circumstances and seeks to reduce barriers to participation.
- **Collaborative and supportive**: Members share knowledge, build connections and learn from one another in a respectful environment.
- **Practical and relevant**: Activities reflect the realities of volunteer management, combining practical experience with evidence and learning.
- **Open to learning:** The Network encourages reflection, constructive challenge and continuous improvement.

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- **Recognition and development**: The Network values the contribution of people who manage and support volunteers and helps strengthen their practice.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1. Steering Group members

Members will:

- Contribute to setting priorities, shaping activities and reviewing the Network's progress
- Bring their experience of volunteer management and represent the interests and perspectives of the wider membership, rather than solely those of their own organisation.
- Share relevant learning and resources and help identify opportunities for collaboration and development.
- Seek feedback from other members and encourage wider participation in the Network.
- Provide constructive challenge to VS and fellow members, working collaboratively and respectfully.
- Act as ambassadors for the Network and uphold its values.
- Contribute to agreed actions according to their capacity, and declare relevant interests.

6.2. Volunteer Scotland

VS retains overall organisational accountability and decision-making authority for the Network's finances, resources, staffing, operational delivery and compliance. The Steering Group will inform priorities and make recommendations on the use of resources, but financial and operational decisions remain the responsibility of VS.

VS will:

- Maintain oversight of the Network's budget, expenditure, staffing, resource allocation, operational delivery and associated risks.
- Convene and facilitate the Steering Group and provide administrative and coordination support.
- Work with members to develop the Network's offer, including events, learning opportunities, resources and communications.
- Provide relevant updates on VS priorities, sector developments and opportunities.
- Facilitate engagement with the wider membership and gather feedback to inform the Network's development.
- Ensure the Network operates in accordance with VS policies, governance arrangements and relevant legal and funding requirements.

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6.3. Authority and decision-making

The Steering Group will agree member-informed strategic priorities within its agreed remit, working in partnership with VS. Where proposals have financial or operational implications, these must be reviewed and approved by VS before commitments are made. The Steering Group cannot independently commit expenditure, enter into contracts, appoint staff or make decisions on behalf of VS.

7. Ways of working

7.1. Meetings

- The Steering Group will meet every two months. Additional meetings may be arranged when required.
- Agendas and papers will be circulated in advance wherever possible.
- Meetings will support collaborative discussion, decision-making and progress against agreed priorities, with consideration of accessibility and participation needs.

7.2. Decision-making

- Decisions will be made by consensus wherever possible. Where consensus cannot be reached, an agreed voting process may be used.
- A meeting will be quorate when at least half of the appointed Steering Group members are present. Decisions made outside meetings must be confirmed and recorded at the next meeting.
- Decisions and actions will be recorded, with leads and timescales identified where appropriate.
- VS will communicate relevant organisational or resource constraints and work with the Steering Group to explore alternatives where proposals cannot be progressed as identified.

7.3. Communication and accountability

- Communication between meetings will take place through email and other agreed collaboration spaces.
- Task-and-finish groups may be established to progress specific activities, involving Steering Group members and, where appropriate, other VS staff and Network members.
- The Steering Group will maintain links with the wider membership, providing opportunities to contribute feedback and influence priorities.

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- The Steering Group will review its progress and the Network's priorities annually, taking account of member feedback, engagement and available evidence of impact.
- Members must declare any actual or potential conflict of interest as soon as it arises. The Chair, in collaboration with VS, will agree how the conflict will be managed, which may include the member withdrawing from the relevant discussion or decision. Declarations and agreed actions will be recorded.

8. Membership

The Steering Group will comprise up to 12 SVDN members. SVDN Steering Group members must currently be involved in organising, supporting, coordinating or managing volunteers, either in a paid or voluntary capacity. This includes people working within volunteer-involving organisations, Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) and other organisations or networks that support volunteering.

Two Volunteer Scotland staff members will sit on the Steering Group: the Participation and Membership Manager and the Participation and Membership Coordinator. They will support coordination and provide organisational context. They will not count towards the total member places.

Membership will aim to reflect the diversity of the Network and wider volunteering sector, including different sectors, sizes, geographical areas, levels of experience, protected characteristics and lived experiences. The Steering Group should seek a balance of perspectives and avoid being dominated by any single sector, organisation, demographic or professional group.

To be eligible for the Steering Group, individuals must be members of SVDN. SVDN is available as an optional additional benefit of Volunteer Scotland membership, so applicants must first hold or obtain VS membership.

As the initial Steering Group is being established ahead of the Network's launch, applicants appointed through the initial recruitment process will become SVDN's first members when the Network officially launches. For future recruitment rounds, applicants must already hold or obtain SVDN membership before taking up their appointment.

All Steering Group members will receive complimentary SVDN membership for the duration of their appointment, regardless of whether they manage volunteers in a paid or voluntary capacity.

8.1. Recruitment

Members will be recruited through a transparent process that sets out the purpose, responsibilities and expected commitment of the role.

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Recruitment will seek to encourage broad participation and address gaps in representation or expertise.

Recruitment will actively seek diverse representation, including across protected characteristics and lived experiences, and address barriers to participation.

Members must maintain their VS and SVDN membership while serving on the Steering Group. Their SVDN membership will be provided on a complimentary basis for the duration of their appointment.

8.2. Commitment

Members are expected to attend meetings regularly, contribute to discussions and agreed actions, engage with the wider membership and uphold these Terms of Reference. Participation arrangements should recognise members' other professional, organisational and voluntary commitments.

8.3. Term duration

Members may serve a maximum of three consecutive years on the Steering Group. Following this, they must take a break of at least one year before becoming eligible for reappointment.

8.4. Resignation and removal

A member may resign from the Steering Group by notifying the Chair and VS. A member's Steering Group appointment may be ended where a member no longer meets the eligibility requirements, repeatedly does not attend or participate without agreement, breaches the Network's values or presents an unmanaged conflict of interest. Any decision to end membership will follow a fair process agreed by VS.

Where a member's Steering Group appointment ends, their entitlement to complimentary SVDN membership will also end. They may continue as an AVDN member under the standard membership arrangements, subject to the applicable membership requirements and fees.

8.5. Chairing

VS will chair the initial meeting to welcome members, provide an introduction to the Network and Steering Group and establish working arrangements.

Following this, the Steering Group will operate a rotating Chair model, with members taking turns to chair one meeting each. This approach will share responsibility for leading the group and provide opportunities for members to develop their chairing skills.

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The rotation will be agreed by the Steering Group in collaboration with VS. VS will provide support and guidance to members undertaking the role, including meeting preparation and facilitation support.

8.6. Duration

The Steering Group will initially be established to guide the development of SVDN. Its role and ongoing need will be reviewed as the Network develops, with a decision made in consultation with VS on whether it should continue, and in what form.

9. Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed every two years by the Steering Group, with support from VS, to ensure they remain relevant to the Network's purpose, membership and priorities.

Any proposed changes will be discussed with the Steering Group and taken forward in accordance with applicable VS governance arrangements.

Last reviewed: November 2026

Next review: November 2028

Annex 1: SVDN Steering Group Rotating Chair Role Description

10. Role purpose

The Chair provides leadership to Scotland's Volunteer Development Network (SVDN) Steering Group during their agreed rotation period, helping the Group work collaboratively with Volunteer Scotland (VS) to provide member-led strategic direction and guide the Network's development in response to members' needs and priorities.

The rotating Chair model shares responsibility for leading the group and provides opportunities for different members to contribute to its leadership.

11. Key responsibilities

11.1. Meeting leadership

- Work with VS to plan agendas and identify priorities for discussion.
- Open the meeting, welcome members, and keep discussions focused on stated objectives.
- Facilitate balanced participation, ensuring all voices are heard while managing dominant speakers.
- Support constructive discussion, managing different views and help the group reach consensus where possible.

11.2. Member engagement and representation

- Encourage members to share their experiences and perspectives and contribute to the Network's development.
- Help ensure discussions reflect a range of perspectives and uphold the Steering Group's values.
- Support the Steering Group in maintaining links with the wider membership.

11.3. Partnership with Volunteer Scotland

- Work collaboratively with VS staff to support the effective running of the Steering Group and development of the Network.
- Maintain clear communication between the Steering Group, VS and the wider membership.
- Contribute to reviewing the Steering Group's progress and priorities.

12. Authority and limitations

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The Chair responsible for carrying out the duties set out in this role description, in line with the Steering Group Terms of Reference and in collaboration with the Steering Group and Volunteer Scotland.

The Chair is expected to work collaboratively with Volunteer Scotland staff and Steering Group members to support the effective functioning of the Steering Group and its contribution to the development of Scotland's Volunteer Development Network.

The Chair does not hold independent authority to commit expenditure, enter into contracts, appoint staff or make decisions on behalf of VS.

13. Eligibility and rotation

The Chair must be a member of the Steering Group and hold Volunteer Scotland membership. SVDN membership will be provided on a complimentary basis for the duration of their Steering Group appointment, in line with the Steering Group Terms of Reference.

Members will take turns undertaking the Chair role, with each rotation normally covering one Steering Group meeting. The rotation schedule will be agreed by the Steering Group in collaboration with VS.

14. Time commitment and expenses

The Chair is expected to prepare for and lead the meeting when it is their turn to do so, undertake relevant preparation and follow-up and contribute to communication and agreed activities between meetings.

The role is voluntary. All reasonable, agreed out-of-pocket expense incurred on SVDN business will be reimbursed in line with organisational policy. Volunteer Scotland is committed to ensuring that reasonable expenses are not a barrier to participation.

15. Support in the role

VS will provide induction, meeting coordination and administrative support, and work with each rotating Chair to plan meetings and follow up actions.

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