

**Cross Party Group on Volunteering Meeting
Minute
Wednesday 25th January 2017, 1.00pm-2.30pm
Committee Room 5, Scottish Parliament
Convenor: Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP**

Attendees

MSP members of the Group

Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP – Scottish Liberal Democrat Party
Jeremy Balfour MSP - Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party
Johann Lamont MSP – Scottish Labour Party

MSP invited attendees

Gordon Lindhurst MSP – Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party

Non-MSPs Members of the Group:

Paul Okroj – Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland, Margaret Starkie – Volunteer Scotland, George Thomson – Volunteer Scotland, Kim Atkinson – Scottish Sports Association, Gordon Brown – VC Borders, Tina Cameron – Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire, Sue Davies – TSI Moray, Sandie Dickson – The State Hospital, Lidia Dye – PKAVS Volunteering Hub, Helen Fleming – Dyslexia Scotland, Maureen Hill – Scottish Water Ways Trust, Ruth Hutton – Scottish Government, Alan Johnstone – Voluntary Action Scotland, James Jopling – Samaritans, Morven McLean – CHAS, Janice Malone – MacMillian Cancer Support, Natalie Masterson – Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise, Alice McArdle – Volunteer Centre East Ayrshire, Janis McCulloch – Scouts Scotland, Claire McHarrie – Scottish Government, Victoria McRae – CVS Falkirk, Bernadette Monaghan – Volunteer Glasgow, Lesley Munro – Voluntary Health Scotland, Rob Murray – Changing Faces, Emma Murton – Guide Dogs, Anne Moodie – Volunteer Midlothian, Louise Orr - Clackmannanshire Third Sector Unit, Joanne Stewart – Breast Cancer Care Scotland, Tracey Stewart – Rowan Alba Ltd, Jack Sanderson – Voluntary Arts Scotland, Liz Watson – Befriending Networks, Helen Webster – Scottish Government, Keith Weston – Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland, Mhairi Whyllie – Highland Third Sector Interface, Marion Findlay – Volunteer Edinburgh, Keith Wimbles – Voluntary Action Fund, Craig Wilson – SCVO, Shelagh Young – Home start UK, Shelia McPherson – St Andrew's First Aid

Apologies

MSP members of the Group

Pauline McNeil MSP – Scottish Labour Party
Fulton McGregor MSP – Scottish National Party

Non-MSPs Members of the Group:

A considerable number of apologies were received for this meeting.

1. Welcome and introductions

Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Cross Party Group on Volunteering and invited introductions.

2. Minutes of Previous meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

All actions from the meeting on the 16th November were ratified.

Actions from previous meeting:

- A request to CPG members will be sent asking them to identify issues/concerns they are currently facing, 3-4 key themes will be identified and an action plan will be created for the CPG to take forward. **Completed**
- Bernadette Monaghan to email information on Adult Recognition awards to Paul Okroj and John Mullin for circulation to the CPG members. **On-going**

3. Matters Arising

- The Convener began by referring back to the point Angela Constance MSP made at the previous meeting on the TSI Review report being published by the end of 2016, as this has now been published he asked if any of the members wished to comment.
- Allan Johnstone – Voluntary Action Scotland (VAS) commented that the report had looked at the current Third Sector Interface (TSI) model and how they have delivered on their core function, the report states recommendations on how the TSI's can improve their function and consultations with various stakeholders, lead by Scottish Government will take place very soon.

4. Further reflections on Cabinet Secretary's Presentation – 'Volunteering is the golden thread of a participative society'

- Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP felt the discussions with the Cabinet Secretary at the last meeting went very well and welcomed her honesty at volunteering not being included in the Fairer Scotland Action Plan and Gov't Work Plan. Her comment regarding Volunteering being the golden thread of society has given the CPG the opportunity to focus on how can we make the golden thread reality, working alongside MSP's and CPG members.
- Helen Webster – Scottish Government Third Sector Division echoed the sentiment of the Cabinet Secretary and stating that the golden thread is very apparent from the meetings she has had with many third sector organisations and others that sit around the CPG table. She indicated that there is still the need to look at processes within Government to ensure that volunteering is seen as the golden thread throughout Government of which there has been a commitment made by increasing capacity/resources within the Third Sector Division and that Helen and her team are meeting with various organisations and building relationships to ensure there is connectivity throughout all decision making/policy discussions.
- Alex Cole-Hamilton asked the members, how do we make this a reality, how can we work with MSP's and Scottish Government to help them achieve their objectives.
- Alan Johnstone – VAS highlighted that volunteering is about individual empowerment in addition to government policy – it's about empowering people and this should be recognised when entering discussions with Government and across all sectors.
- There is a need for a more joined up approach working across all Government Directorates and this is where the CPG can help provide that conduit.
- Shelagh Young – Homestart stated that self organised volunteering needs to be recognised, we are a participative society with inter-sections of activities.
- Bernadette Monaghan – Volunteer Glasgow highlighted there still seems to be focus on statistics but does this help us understand who we are delivering on the Programme for Government? Should there be a volunteer ambassador within each Government Directorate/agenda to ensure policy delivery.
- George Thomson – Volunteer Scotland said he was encouraged by the honesty of the Cabinet Secretary regarding the Fairer Scotland Action Plan and recognising that volunteering is the golden thread of a participative society but felt that there is a blind spot with the programme for government for example; developing a young workforce in Scotland. He

asked the group where they thought other blind spots were and how could we work together to prevent blind spots.

- Keith Wimbles – Voluntary Action Fund – pointed out that the Scottish Volunteering Forum (SVF) are talking to public sector organisations, discussing grant funding and commissioning of services and this should be discussed at a future CPG which may assist in identifying blind spots.
- Paul Okroj – Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland, suggested that the CPG should develop an environmental audit for each gov't department and new strategy – identifying how volunteering supports their directorate/strategic outcomes and what investment they have made in volunteering,
- Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP agreed this would help measure success and make the group action focused.
- Tracey Stewart – Rowan Alba Ltd, highlighted she has been involved in an Open Government Partnership Programme which is very useful and is in touch with people providing access to building relationships/partnerships.
- Johann Lamont MSP raised the issue that often with CPG's external members attend and have very little support from MSP's, its clear to see that that this CPG is important given the number of people attending. It is vital that members of CPG's help inform questions/agendas and create an awareness and transparency. Are MSP's assisting in the correct areas, we need to know what is going on and what the issues are and there needs to be re-cognition of what Government are doing, it should be a partnership.
- Kim Atkinson – SSA, echoed what Johann Lamont said and asked what support does MSP's need from CPG members.
- Johann Lamont MSP stated MSP's want to be 'champions' and support organisations and help influence budget decisions etc, e.g. Johann sits on the education committee, are their any issues in education around volunteering? Organisations need to communicate and should keep an eye on the committee agendas and provide feedback.
- Jeremy Balfour MSP asked what is stopping people volunteering, are there issues out there that MSP's aren't aware of? The Cross Party Group's role is to help explore these gaps/issues. Volunteering is important to Scotland's economy and not enough emphasis is given to its importance.
- George Thomson – Volunteer Scotland highlighted that volunteering between 11-19 year olds has increased from 33% to 52% in recent years due to what is taking place within schools, statistics/evidence such as this needs to be recognised as well as the issues.

5. Priority Areas for 2017

- The convener thanked all 24 members who had responded to the action of identifying issues/concerns they are currently facing, allowing for 3-4 key themes will be identified and an action plan to be created for the Cross Party Group.
- The key themes which were identified were;
 - Is there a need for a Volunteer Strategy for Scotland which would tackle issues identified such as;
 - Inclusion/Equality and Diversity
 - Employer Supported Volunteering
 - Participation rates
 - The definition of Volunteering
 - Health and Social care
 - Barriers to participation and recognition of Volunteering
 - Volunteer engagement and volunteer management
 - Adult volunteering
 - Youth Volunteering

- George Thomson – Volunteer Scotland suggested that the group should re-visit the United Nations work on values that underpins volunteering. What are the values we want to live through volunteering?
- Bernadette Monaghan – Volunteer Glasgow indicated that the Glasgow Poverty Panel have been doing a lot of good work which has assisted in the approach the Glasgow 2018 Games will take with regards to inclusiveness.
- Morven McLean – CHAS stated she welcomed the reflections from people around the table but questions how we are measuring the impact of volunteering, collectively. Organisations tend to work in silos and a joined up approach would be more beneficial, and questions if that should be a strategy or something else, such as developing volunteer management as a profession? This could be sub group for the Scottish Volunteering Forum
- Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP suggested contacting SPICE at Scottish Parliament to help identify the impact of volunteering.
- Sandie Dickson – State Hospital highlighted that it is good to increase volunteering will ensure structures are in place to support volunteers but we can't open the 'flood gates' for volunteers as this has a major impact on staff and resources.
- James Jopling – Samaritans stated that there are organisations around the table that will engage with volunteers who recruit, train, and support and manage volunteers. Volunteering is seen as a discrete thing, and this should be recognised.
- Shelagh Young – Home start UK highlighted that organisations who engage/support volunteers have to tender for contracts/funds as any other organisation which creates a disruption within the transaction of services and it undercuts how you support people into volunteering.
- Gordon Brown – VC Borders stated we should be influencing positive change, and asking questions on how we can make positive change, should this be through a national drive to support volunteers and organisations? There is a need to stop being so focused on the numbers who are volunteering but look at the quality of volunteering.
- Kim Atkinson – SSA asked what is the definition of volunteering? Is there a set of principles on what volunteers should get out of volunteering? Who would develop a volunteer strategy? It's not about creating another strategy it's about working collectively across government and organisations. How do we make the golden thread happen?
- Alex Cole- Hamilton stated that a strategy would exist on a shelf somewhere whereas the golden thread suggests this is live and interactive. Guidance on how to be part of/support the golden thread is a more strategic approach. The CPG secretariat will work with SPICE to get a better understanding of the social impact of volunteering.
- George Thomson – Volunteer Scotland suggests the remit for the CPG should form the strategy, providing specific areas of work/themes.
- Natalie Masterson – Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise agreed that a guidance document is relevant to ensure all the drivers are in place, but we haven't mentioned the Community Empowerment Act which gives us the driver to take local action and get to the heart of local communities.
- Paul Okroj – Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland confirmed that not one strategy is needed, that a single strategy would not achieve what is needed, its about going back to MSP's, providing them with the relevant information/tools to help make changes and engage with local authorities.
- Rob Murray – Changing Faces suggested that we should look at the Million Hands project which tackles mental health as an example of how organisations can work together.
- The Convener suggested that based on discussions it is likely that sub-groups will be formed as part of the CPG to tackle some of the issues.

6. AGM/Volunteers Week Reception

- The AGM/Volunteers Week Reception which will be sponsored by Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP takes place on 7th June.
- The Scottish Volunteer Forum Volunteers Week sub-group are working on a brief which can be shared amongst the CPG members. The aim is to further promote volunteering as the 'golden thread' of Scottish society. This 'golden thread' theme reflects observations made by Angela Constance MSP about volunteering at the inaugural Cross Party Group on Volunteering in November 2016.
- Kim Atkinson – SSA suggested that MSP's should be asked what they are doing during Volunteers Week, can we ask them to Volunteer?
- Allan Johnstone – VAS suggested using Volunteers Week to promote the golden hour of volunteering which is an American concept and ties in with the golden thread
- Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP suggest the reception could be a market stall type event involving volunteers from various organisations and that MSP's can engage with, seek support across all sectors.

7. Any other Business

- Bernadette Monaghan – Volunteer Glasgow confirmed that they have been awarded funding from Big Lottery for Adult Recognition Awards and will be contacting organisations to help scope this project.
- Helen Webster – Third Sector Unit highlighted that the review of the Scottish Household Survey questions will start very soon and Jacqueline Rae will be contact with organisations to assist in the consultation.

8. Date of next meeting

Date of next meeting is 29th March 2017 (1.00pm-2.30pm).

ACTIONS

- The convener to write to MSP's asking for their support during Volunteers Week and to ask how the Cross Party Group on Volunteering can assist them in their areas of work.
- CPG secretariat to look into the golden hour of volunteering which is an American concept and ties in with the golden thread and include this in the Volunteers Week activities.
- CPG secretariat to identify how a 'market place' theme would be created at the Volunteers Week reception.
- CPG secretariat to identify the sub-groups required to tackle some of the issues raised.
- CPG secretariat to contact SPICE to find out what research is available on the social impact of volunteering.
- CPG Secretariat to look at how to develop an audit of draft Government legislation (Bills) to ensure volunteering is included in them e.g. Fairer Scotland Action Plan.