



2024-2025 Impact Report: Scotland



Introduction

Volunteering Matters exists to create stronger communities through the power of volunteering. We work with local partners to develop impactful programmes that support individuals and communities across the UK.

Since 1962, we have used our influence to champion volunteering as a powerful tool to build a thriving, resilient society. Our projects are co-created with the people and communities we work alongside: an approach that encourages our participants to become future volunteers and leaders, not just beneficiaries.

We believe that volunteering is an act of optimism. A quiet rebellion against the idea that one person cannot make a difference.

In Scotland, our work is rooted in local communities while aligned with national ambitions. From Aberdeenshire to Dumfries and Galloway, our projects support children, young people, older adults, and families throughout pivotal moments in their lives.

Our approach aligns with the Scottish Government’s Volunteering Action Plan, The Promise, Getting It Right For Every Child and National Performance Framework (and much more), contributing to improved community wellbeing, empowerment, and citizenship. We are proud to be part of a national movement that envisions a Scotland where everyone can volunteer—more often and throughout their lives.

We work in partnership with communities and the voluntary sector. We connect services to ensure that the best support is available for all.

This report highlights the impact of our work across Scotland, demonstrating how local action contributes to national change. Many projects overlap in theme, but all drive change through volunteering.

“ I made the decision to join Volunteering Matters, and that was really one of the best decisions ever. I started volunteering as I wanted to give something back to the community and help families who are struggling and need a friendly hand. Volunteering not only changed the lives of families but also mine. It is no better feeling than helping somebody in need and their appreciation of you.

- Volunteer Family Supporter

2024-2025 - At a glance

4,443

Individuals volunteered in Scotland

1,271

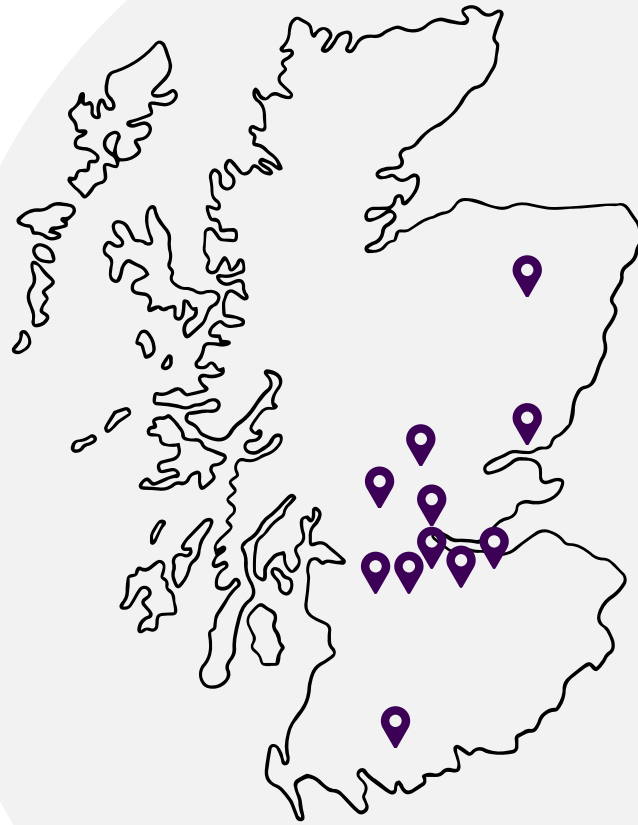
Direct beneficiaries were supported*

14

Projects delivered from national to local scales

397

Wildlife habitats created. We also support animals and the environment!



Worked in 11 different localities -not including our national work.

“

I feel as though I have gained a lot of confidence during my time with my young person. This has made me aware of how just 2 hours out of my day means a lot to her.

- Volunteer Befriender

*On some of our projects beneficiaries become volunteers, however we only count these individuals once.

National programmes

Volunteering Matters is a national charity that takes both national and community-focused approaches to volunteering involvement. We are a sector leader in community-based volunteering interventions, and we also influence policy and stakeholders through forums and networks which improve access to volunteering for all.

Through **Action Earth**, we support voluntary groups to engage in environmental and conservation efforts by providing small grants, advice, and networks for support. Volunteers transform areas across Scotland – to support and sustain unique biodiversity through ambitious and innovative methods. By improving the outlooks of the local people, we support them on their social action journey, leading on the decisions that are made about the place that they call home. Throughout 24-25 4,001 Volunteers delivered 142 projects across Scotland which equated to 36,211 volunteering hours.

We deliver **Employee Volunteering** wherein we create locally delivered volunteering opportunities for corporate staff, this could include, one-off team building days to long-term partnerships. This has a positive impact on employees, organisations, and the local communities across Scotland.

We are the lead delivery partner of **YouthVIP**, a Scottish Government funded national initiative, co-designed and led by young people (aged 16- 30) across Scotland to improve and scale access to volunteering for young people. Our support enables young people to improve their own life chances, lead policy change and drive sector-wide improvements.

Get the Gen works with organisations across Scotland to help them understand how to unlock the potential within their multigenerational workforce. Get the Gen supports employers by providing training, solutions, and consultancy services that support best practice in creating purposeful working environments which work for all colleagues. Get the Gen's training is embedded in the fabric of youth work in Scotland, and their skills and knowledge are vital for employers looking to support their next generation of staff.



4,001 Action Earth Volunteers

142 Projects Supported & Funded

36,211 Total Volunteering Hours

“

Action Earth is a fabulous scheme to be involved in. The grants may be small, but the impact is big!
– **Sustainable Kirriemuir**

“

As a team we were all focused on the same goal and to be able to see a before and after on the same day, at the same time, is something we rarely get to experience as a team in our business.
–**Employee Volunteer.**

16 Team Volunteering Events

169 Total Volunteers

1,014 Total Volunteering Hours

31 Get The Gen Training Sessions

17 Different Employers

800+ Participants



Feedback from
YouthVIP Panel
Members:

SHAUN
YOUTHVIP PANEL
MEMBER, 23yrs
'LIFE CHANGING'
'EMPOWERING' 'EYE-OPENING'

ALLANA-
YOUTHVIP PANEL
MEMBER, 19yrs.
'ENGAGING' 'REWARDING'
'OPPORTUNITIES'

Reducing social isolation and loneliness

Social isolation and loneliness is one of the biggest community challenges we have. Highlighted by the pandemic, we know that continuous loneliness leads to poor health outcomes for individuals. We also know that social isolation and loneliness can look different depending on individual circumstances, groups, and environment. We are committed to reducing social isolation and loneliness by encouraging community connections through volunteering. Our North Lanarkshire Befriending and Retired and Senior Volunteering Programmes (RSVP) across Forth Valley and Glasgow embody this commitment.

North Lanarkshire Befriending provides invaluable emotional, practical and social support for Young Carers aged 8-18. We recruit, train and support Befrienders (aged 18+) who choose to invest time in the community supporting children to take a break from their challenging home lives.

RSVP offers people aged 50+ the opportunity to use their skills, experience, and enthusiasm to support others, reduce social isolation, and strengthen communities. RSVP volunteers contribute in many ways, from helping children in schools, supporting NHS services, and leading outdoor activities. The impact is far-reaching—not only for those who receive support but for the volunteers themselves, who benefit from improved health, wellbeing, and social connections.

“

Many of our young people are very isolated and I believe that this isolation contributes to their mental health presentation. The befriending service matches the young people with a befriender and every young person who has accessed the service has given nothing but positive feedback.

- CAMHS Nurse,
North Lanarkshire

Throughout 24/25 in North Lanarkshire:

15 Volunteer Befrienders

18 Young People Supported

1,200 Hours of Volunteering

“

I plan to continue volunteering for many years. I've built good relationships with the staff and children, and they really appreciate the support. I feel needed — and I'm doing something I enjoy while giving something back.

- School Volunteer

“

A stroll in friendly company, a chat and refreshments afterwards. Making it happen for others makes my day.

- Walk Leader

“

I applied to be a volunteer after seeing an advert on the Volunteer Scotland website. The role immediately appealed to me as it mentioned helping children to improve their reading skills. I am passionate about children learning to read as I cannot imagine how much more difficult life must be when you cannot read.

I am working with a wee group of 5 children in Primary One helping them with their sounds and putting words together. Their teacher is so lovely and very welcoming. I hope that in the next school year I can continue to support the children... I absolutely love the wee group and enjoy every minute supporting them.

- School Volunteer

215

RSVP Volunteers
aged 50+ in
Scotland



511

Beneficiaries of
RSVP Projects
(approximately)



Supporting children and young people

Societal challenges such as child poverty, educational non-attendance, and inequalities between care experienced young people and their peers are all prevalent and ongoing issues across Scotland. At Volunteering Matters, we are dedicated to supporting children and young people to achieve their dreams and to grow up in happy and healthy homes. We do this across all of our work, but predominantly we deliver Family Supporters and Brighter Futures in Edinburgh, and Grandmentors in Perth & Kinross and Midlothian.

Family Supporters: a tailored programme to support families through practical, emotional, and social support, empowering families to face life challenges. We recruit, train, and manage volunteers to support each family to improve their health and wellbeing, housing, and finance, as well as education, employment, and training.

Grandmentors: our award-winning intergenerational mentoring programme for care experienced young people. Volunteer Mentors (aged 50+) bring a wealth of knowledge to build confidence, independence, and networks, all whilst providing practical, emotional, and social support around housing, career/education goals and health.

Brighter Futures: supported volunteering for secondary school pupils (S2-S4) struggling to engage in education, not attending or on flexible timetables; we provide initial support, and then they are matched to a volunteering placement based on their individual aspirations and challenges, with the optional support of a volunteer Mentor.

Cashback: Community Connections: delivered in consortium in West Lothian, we support young people involved in the justice system to engage in community volunteering



“Volunteering with Volunteering Matters has been a great way to feel more connected to the city and meet people outside my usual circles. It’s also challenged how I think about empathy—not just feeling for someone but actually trying to understand their world as they experience it. It’s made me rethink what support really is, too. Sometimes, it’s not about advice or solutions but just showing up, listening, and being present. - Family Supporter”

“I’m very glad I decided to go through with it even though I wasn’t sure initially because of all the benefits it’s brought me.... it’s helped me to improve my social skills with strangers and to work on my confidence.

-Brighter Futures Pupil



81
volunteers across
the projects

148
children, young
people and
families
supported

76%
improvement in
family mental
health

120+
hours of
volunteering by
pupils

85%
of Grandmentors
young people were
independent or
stable in having
access to housing

Community support

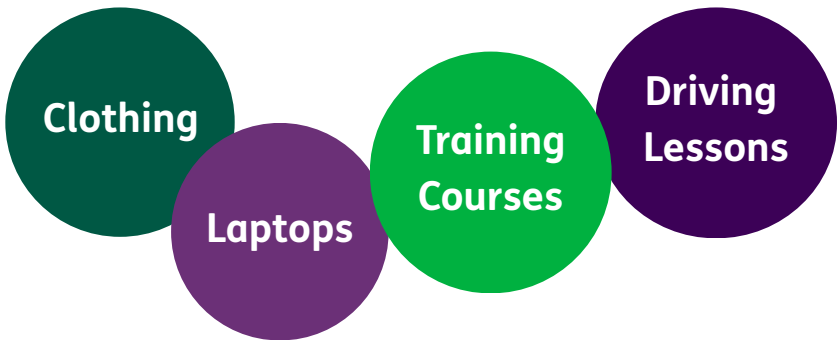
The importance of community and social connections was truly highlighted by the pandemic. Yet, we are still not prioritising community-driven initiatives that support individuals and groups, prevent poor wellbeing and address societal challenges.

Community is at the heart of everything we do. All of our work is driven by and for the benefit of the communities that we serve. Community support and volunteering go hand in hand as can be seen through our Supported Volunteering work which is delivered in Aberdeenshire, Dumfries & Galloway, and Dundee.

Supported Volunteering supports people with barriers to community participation to take active steps toward their goals and dreams. Our fantastic staff work with each individual to develop confidence, understand their existing skills and set a plan to develop new ones. This culminates in a tailored volunteering placement which encourages practical application of skills whilst gaining experience in a relevant field. Additionally, people can be matched with a Volunteer Mentor to support them on their journey.

“ I have a client who has been in mental health services for years and is now undertaking a volunteering role... her sense of accomplishment in reaching this point means she is able to consider a reduction of input and support from the CMHT as she continues to gain confidence!
- Dundee CMHT.

Our teams go above and beyond to remove barriers to community participation. For example, sourcing funding for:



Ryan's Story (pseudonym)

Ryan was referred for additional support as he has multiple barriers such as self-diagnosed additional support needs, ARFID, and intense rurality. Ryan began working with us to increase his confidence and source employment opportunities. It was clear that volunteering would be a helpful way to overcome some of his social anxiety while supported towards self-employment through his incredible paintings.

We were able to source Ryan a volunteering placement with Oxfam where he built his confidence but also gained cash experience and became increasingly comfortable with speaking to members of the public. It is partly down to this experience which has now given him the push to move forward with his own business ideas.

“By offering this wrap-around support, there has been a huge transformation in Ryan! He is now very focused on what he needs to do. He has done so much research and is currently putting together a list of equipment to allow him to start testing the process of applying his art to mugs...I am really pleased with his progress.” – Ryan's SOSE Coach.



Partnerships and collaborations

Working in partnership and collaboration is the only way that we are going to be able to address society's most pressing challenges. Collaborative working means we can create and deliver the best support possible and biggest impact for all, rather than competing. We have a hundreds of partners across all 32 Local Authorities, including funders, referral partners, charity partners, and community connections. From the hyper-local community groups to national organisations, we work with each partner to support people and communities in Scotland to thrive. Our work would not be possible without every partner.

Thank you.

“

I would just like to express how positive I feel our partnership working has been in supporting the development of young people in Dumfries and Galloway. I have had nothing but positive feedback from the young people I have referred... I believe these young people are making an impact in their local communities through the volunteering opportunities they take part in. All of this is made possible through your connections, partnership working and person centred approach in supporting volunteers in their journeys. - Career Advisor, Skills Development Scotland.

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We are a leader in the volunteering space and want to ensure that volunteering is accessible and inclusive for all. We are active participants in the Volunteering Action Plan, YouthVIP, and iWill movements. We contribute to local and national policy groups and Third Sector Interface Forums to ensure that the voice of volunteers is represented and that the power of volunteering is recognised. We also collaborate with other voluntary organisations, working in consortium to provide the best support possible for all.

We want to embody partnership working across all we do. In an increasingly challenging socioeconomic and political environment with compounding challenges for individuals, groups and communities, we must act together to ensure the best support is available for all. We are always keen to work together; by working in partnership, we will create more supportive and inclusive communities across Scotland that not only address some of these challenges but seek to prevent them too.

Looking ahead

As we look back over the past year in Scotland, I feel immense pride and gratitude for the extraordinary impact we've achieved together. At the centre of it all are the 4,443 individuals who gave their time, energy, and compassion to support more than 1,200 people. Their commitment has touched lives at every stage; from young people finding their way in a complex world, to adults shaping their futures, to those in later life who continue to give back with generosity and wisdom.

Our volunteers have done so much more than give their time. They have reduced isolation, built bridges across differences, and created spaces where people feel seen, valued, and connected. What unites them is a shared conviction: that volunteering is bigger than any one person. It is about creating connection, nurturing belonging, and unlocking potential in people and places too often overlooked. The ripple effects can be felt in classrooms, care homes, community centres, and neighbourhoods across Scotland. Together, they are building stronger, more inclusive communities where everyone has the chance to thrive.

As we look to the future, I am energised by the road ahead. With the launch of our new five-year strategy, Volunteering Matters is entering a defining chapter. Our vision is bold: to deepen our impact, broaden our reach, and forge new partnerships that enable even more people across Scotland to flourish. But it is a vision rooted in what we already know: that when people come together with a shared purpose, remarkable things happen.

To every volunteer, partner, funder, staff member, and supporter, thank you. You have made this year what it was. And to those we have not yet worked with, we look forward to creating something powerful together.

-Amanda Naylor, CEO



For more about Volunteering Matters, visit
www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk

Building a better future for everyone

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