

#YouthVIP

Power of Youth Day

case studies from the YouthVIP Panel

written by FA

panel member from 2023-2025

Can you tell me a bit about your progression through your own volunteering roles and what this progression has meant to you?

“My inspiration to start volunteering was rooted in personal experience. During my childhood, my rights were not respected, protected or fulfilled by the agencies or professionals involved in my life. I know too well the experience of suffering both in sight and in silence. I can resonate with the feeling of being unheard in the decisions that impact my life. Unfortunately, my experience is not unique. As such, it is this realisation that has been the driving force in my own volunteering journey.”

At the beginning of my volunteering journey, I drew upon my lived experience, joining Haggeye, RNIB Scotland's Youth Forum for young people with sight loss, wherein we have campaigned on issues such as independent living and accessible transport. Around this time, I also became a Young Advisor to Bruce Adamson, the former Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland. As a young advisor, I was involved CYPSC's work relating to climate justice, mental health counselling in schools, and the role of Independent Human Rights Institutions in holding duty bearers to account for the delivery of children's rights. I had the opportunity to campaign for UNCRC incorporation and subsequently attend an international children's rights symposium in Taiwan celebrating the 35th anniversary of the UNCRC.



Along this journey, my volunteering consolidated on the topics of advocacy, disability awareness and youth participation. Notably, in November 2021, I was elected as a member of the Scottish Youth Parliament for Galloway and West Dumfries, and subsequently chairperson of Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council, Dumfries and Galloway's regional youth democracy structure. This opened the door to representing the voices of children and young people at both a local and national level. ***Through youth participation, I engaged in a network of organisations. This diversified my volunteering experiences, empowered me to share good practice and allowed me to meet like-minded young people.*** Notably, one such organisation was Young Scot. Like many of the 900,000 young people in Scotland who know Young Scot, I hadn't previously engaged with the organisation directly. This changed when I joined as a #YSHive volunteer in 2022. Initially volunteering on the Young Person's Guarantee panel and subsequently on the YouthVIP panel. YSHive volunteers like me have the opportunity to collaborate with other young people, engage with decision-makers and contribute positively to the lives of youth people across Scotland. In November 2024, I stepped away from YouthVIP to join Young Scot's Board of Trustees as a non-executive director.



Recently, there has been a significant transition in my volunteering roles. Currently, I continue to serve as a non-executive director for Young Scot. I have also been Trustee for Partners in Advocacy since December 2023. ***However, my volunteering journey was brought full-circle when I was appointed as a chair-qualified panel member in Scotland's Children's Hearing System. This appointment resulted in me becoming one of the youngest panel members in Scotland and possibly the youngest person to chair a Children's Hearing in the system's history. In this role, I can ensure that children and young people's voices remain heard, listened to and respected in the key decisions made within their lives. Whilst also prioritising that their rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.***

What has been your biggest volunteering achievement so far and why?

One of my biggest achievements is simply reaching where I am today. Volunteering has influenced all areas of my life. I would not be studying my current course at university, if it were not for the opportunities, connections and relationships that I was able to build through volunteering. Similarly, if not for volunteering, I doubt I would have had the employment and work experience that I have had today. The intersectional nature between volunteering with youth organisations and youthwork paved the way for paid roles as a youth activity worker and youth consultant.

Some of the most rewarding aspects of my volunteer work has been seeing the positive impact that listening, working and engaging directly with young people can have. Often, when volunteering in an area that relates to policy and decision making, change can take so long to have an impact. But, through volunteering on things such as funding panels, committee meetings and other opportunities it can be much easier to see that change. *I also find it really rewarding when decision-makers recognise the challenges that young people face and actively work to improve their lives.*



Fundamentally, I could not imagine my life without volunteering. It has not only changed my life but saved it too. Volunteering has been the anchor that has grounded and guided me through the waves of recent years. It has endured the significant transitions in my life, such as moving to university away from my rural town in the borders.

What role does YouthVIP provide to young people in Scotland?

I particularly enjoyed working with YoungScot's partners for YouthVIP. For instance, by working with Volunteering Matters, I engaged in an event that involved the delivery of a session on supporting intergenerational working with Get The Gen to the University of Edinburgh's HR team. I have also been able to attend various events reflecting on my role as a trustee / non-executive director. For instance, during various volunteers' weeks, I have been invited by Volunteering Matters to sit on different discussion panels in places such as Adobe's offices in Edinburgh and virtually within the Thriving Minds Network in Northeast England.

My personal experience of participating in YouthVIP was incredible. As a member of the YouthVIP panel, I had the opportunity to work with local authorities, meet Ministers, undertake training, and notably help with the preparation of a workshop at Scotland's SCVO conference. There was also lots of opportunities to engage with Young Scot's governance prior to joining the board, with several engagement sessions and opportunities to be involved in recruitment of new staff.

On a personal level, YouthVIP is a group that I worry cannot truly be captured by words.

As a project, YouthVIP seeks to improve access to volunteering opportunities for young people across Scotland. Not only does this occur externally, in the work that the group outputs. For instance, by working directly with organisations, local authorities and other partnerships. But it is also reflected internally, in the young people that participate in YouthVIP. YouthVIP brings together a cohort of diverse young people with different conceptions and experiences of volunteering. As no two young people are at the same stage in their volunteering journey, it is a great space to nurture ambition, share experiences, good practice and create networks.

VOLUNTEERING  **MATTERS**