

#youth VIP



Annual Report

2024/25

Delivered by:



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



Contents

Introduction	2
Strategic Leadership	3
- Engagement	4
Youth-Focused Research and Evaluation	6
- YouthVIP national survey overview	6
- Key findings	7
- What's next	11
Youth Engagement	12
- Panel activity	12
- Schools activity	15
Learning Practice	17
- Training	17
- Community of practice	18
Communication	22
Conclusions and Next Steps	24

Introduction



This year we reflect on a programme of YouthVIP which has focussed on reconnecting with our communities to understand their perspectives and experiences.

In gaining a strong reputation for working alongside young people to champion inclusive volunteering across Scotland, we want to ensure our programme continues to resonate, not just to young people directly, but to partner institutions, volunteer involving organisations, national and local movements, and wider stakeholders. Whilst the original recommendations, created in 2019, that YouthVIP was founded on, still remain true to our drive and focus, we know a lot has changed over this time, and therefore it is only right that we take the opportunity to adapt and evolve our programme. This has allowed us a renewed focus,

alignment across key challenges, and prioritisation on how to support key communities moving forward.

In moving through this process of re-engagement and refocussing, we've been able to create deeper relationships with existing partners, and align our activities with national frameworks, such as the Volunteering for All Action Plan, and Young Person's Guarantee. It's also provided a new platform to bring others into our programme, broadening the reach and reputation of our work.

The following report sets out our operational delivery as the YouthVIP programme team, achieved between April 2024 to March 2025, as well as presenting key outcomes and, where appropriate, recommendations for future steps.

Strategic Leadership

YouthVIP has been able to go from strength to strength in a year which has seen a challenging backdrop for the volunteering sector – diversity of engagement, lack of funding and a decline in volunteering participation across all age groups.

In spite of this, YouthVIP has continued to raise the awareness of support available through our community champions by not only displaying the tremendous work that goes on, but also by working directly with partners to help support and plan future development opportunities for young people in volunteering.

There has been a fantastic wealth of community led initiatives that not only needed to be championed locally but also as ‘Ambassadors & Leaders’ as the voices of success and more importantly to share this success with others.

YouthVIP has been at the forefront of putting people and organisations in touch with other like-minded, positive, creative, and success-driven people and parties. In building this network of organisations throughout Scotland, covering the length and breadth of the country, we’ve been able to support queries from individuals looking for advice and opportunity to either get development opportunities in to place or to further develop something they are already working on.

Following on from last year’s hard work and effort reaching out to each of the Scottish TSI’s and their local communities, we were able to build on this through gathering feedback, answering questions and taking part in opportunities that presented themselves.

The following is just a taster of the great links being made and opportunities created.



99

Attendees at training workshops delivered across the year, covering 24 different TSI regions

436

Responses to the 2024 ‘Youth Volunteering in Scotland’ research survey

32

TSIs engaged at multiple levels



Delivery of in-person youth-led Discussion Day event, to highlight challenges around youth volunteering



Largest ever youth panel with greater diversity, following a positive round of recruitment



Deeper engagement across the Volunteering sector through connections with the likes of Volunteer Scotland, and participation at strategic Cross Governmental Groups

Engagement

Stirlingshire & Clackmananshire

Created their own Volunteer (and other) Services Portal. They have talked to and shared with several local authorities as a potential pathway of not just communication but wealth of other strategic opportunities for organisations within community to - share information, build and strengthen networks and provide a positive service destination for all.

Fife Voluntary Action

Secondary Schools volunteering project is up and running with great success. Their pilot support project has been groundbreaking with the results it has seen from one school alone. So many people have benefitted from us connecting them to the FVA team to start something of their own.

Dundee Volunteer & Voluntary Action (Barnardos)

An ongoing work-in-development to encourage and develop an even more structured action plan for 14+ young people in to volunteering opportunities with Barnardos in and around the Dundee & Angus area.

Volunteer Midlothian – Active Schools

Volunteering Matters and Edinburgh Leisure pilot project. Sharing some great ideas that in theory, just need to be put in to practice. Having the ability to step up, investigate and take the lead to link up these great organisations for young people who want to volunteer and give them fantastic pathways of development, leading to more young people being placed into volunteer roles.



YouthVIP colleagues have also been active participants and leaders in some of the Volunteering Action Plan working groups led by Volunteer Scotland, such as:

- Policy Champions Network
- Celebration and Recognition Working Group
- Inclusive Volunteering – when it restarts

We sit on the following broader groups and collaborative networks:

- Cross Party Group on Volunteering
- Scottish Volunteering Forum
- Saltire Awards Steering Group

In these groups and meetings we have represented the interests of YouthVIP, young volunteers and our youth panel. We've had the opportunity to share learning and meet with the network leads to discuss opportunities for young people to be more involved in the work and decision making of these groups.

Oxfam Partnership

Reaching out to larger organisations local to communities and with a huge scope of potential support and development, not just of young people in volunteering but also multi-generational volunteers. YouthVIP have spent some time with Oxfam discussing and looking into all of the available options that present themselves within the 'retail' environment of the Oxfam world. The joint project 'Full Cycle' is still in its infancy stages due to the potential size and wealth of opportunities it can and will present. Directly linking in schools and communities for young volunteers it will offer a clear and decisive pathway of opportunity through the Oxfam 'retail' arm but also engage with other potential pathways for – work experience, part-time work and full time work not just within the retail sector but within the Oxfam umbrella, which could be global depending on levels of commitment and determination. Ongoing talks also cover the likes of the joining process, the continued internal support / training available, the ongoing development and then opportunities presenting themselves for said young person.

*note – although exclusively being worked on with 'Oxfam', this model ('Full Cycle') is viable and adaptable to absolutely everyone within the Voluntary sector looking to engage and offer experience to young people (and others).

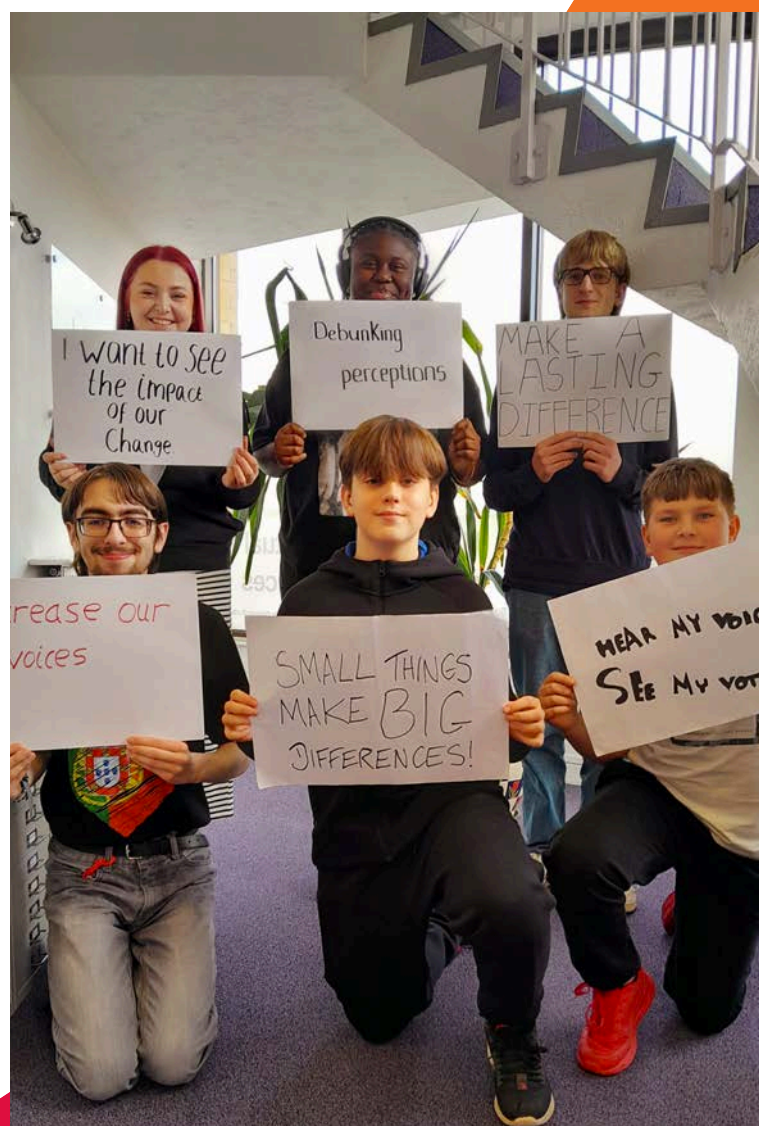
Other sector engagement

We worked with Scottish Government to highlight the importance of young people's voices and influence being built into the Saltire Awards Steering Group and shared some potential models of engagement.

YouthVIP consortium partners are also lead organisations for the #iWill Movement across the

UK, and use insight and learnings gained from this programme to support the delivery of YouthVIP. We have connected YouthVIP work with projects across other relevant aspects of work specific to YouthLink Scotland, such as our Scottish Attainment Challenge programme and work around Employability and the Careers Review.

Volunteering Matters are a delivery partner for the UK Government national Youth Engagement strategy – **Deliver You**, which is in active consultation with young people across England relating to provision of services, opportunities, and barriers to success. In delivering this work, we're able to learn and reflect best practice across similar elements of YouthVIP work.



Youth-Focused Research and Evaluation

YouthVIP national survey overview

One of our key strands of delivery this year was the running of a research project to gauge the views and lived experiences of young volunteers (past, present and future) across Scotland. As YouthVIP holds the recommendations created in 2019, following the completion of the initial research project, true to our delivery to this day, we wanted the opportunity to take a refreshed look at the picture for youth volunteering across Scotland. This would help us understand how closely our programme aligns with supporting the opportunities and alleviating the key challenges for young people across our communities.

Process

In September – December 2018 a short survey designed by an earlier iteration of the panel asked young people across Scotland questions on accessing volunteering, the benefits from volunteering, and the barriers which had been experienced. 163 completed responses were received to this survey, the full report of which is available on request.

In summer 2024, the current YouthVIP panel chose to refresh this earlier survey, adding new questions and refining others, to better understand how volunteering in Scotland has changed over these 6 years.

Young Scot's Data and Insights team worked with the panel to develop the 2024 survey. This included setting the key themes for the survey, and identifying which questions from the previous version to include,

as well as creating new questions.

This 2024 Youth Volunteering in Scotland survey was open for responses from October to December 2024. 436 completed responses were received – a 63% increase on completion of the first YouthVIP survey.

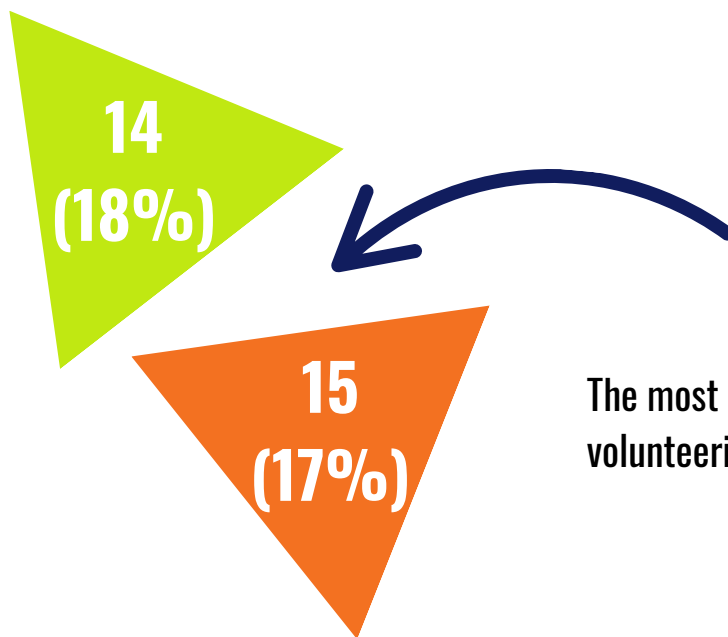
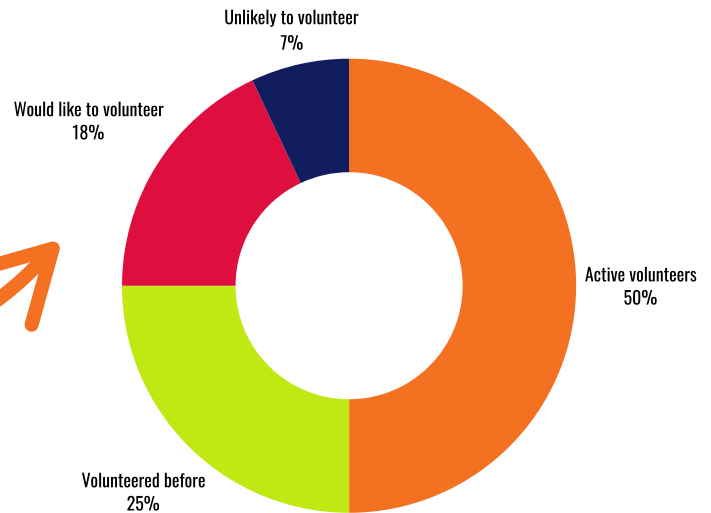
The Survey was promoted to young people through Young Scot's volunteer network; the Young Scot Membership platform; social media posts aimed at partnership organisations on Twitter/X; LinkedIn; Threads; Facebook; and BlueSky. Volunteer Centres/ Third Sector Interfaces and the youth work sector were also contacted and asked to share the survey with young people in their areas. Posts were created and shared directly with young people using promoted posts on Instagram and Snapchat. An incentive of a draw for four sets of £25 Love2Shop vouchers was offered.

Survey findings

Please note that as survey logic was used to selectively display questions about experiences volunteering only to those who reported that they had volunteered in the past or volunteered now, the number of responses to each question varies across the survey.

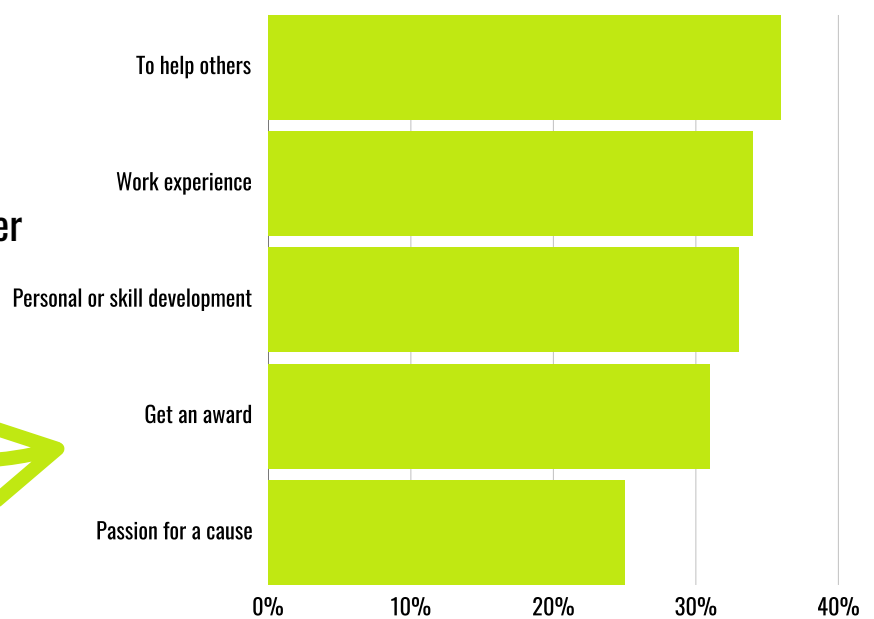
Key findings

463 young people responded to the survey, of these when asked their thoughts on volunteering

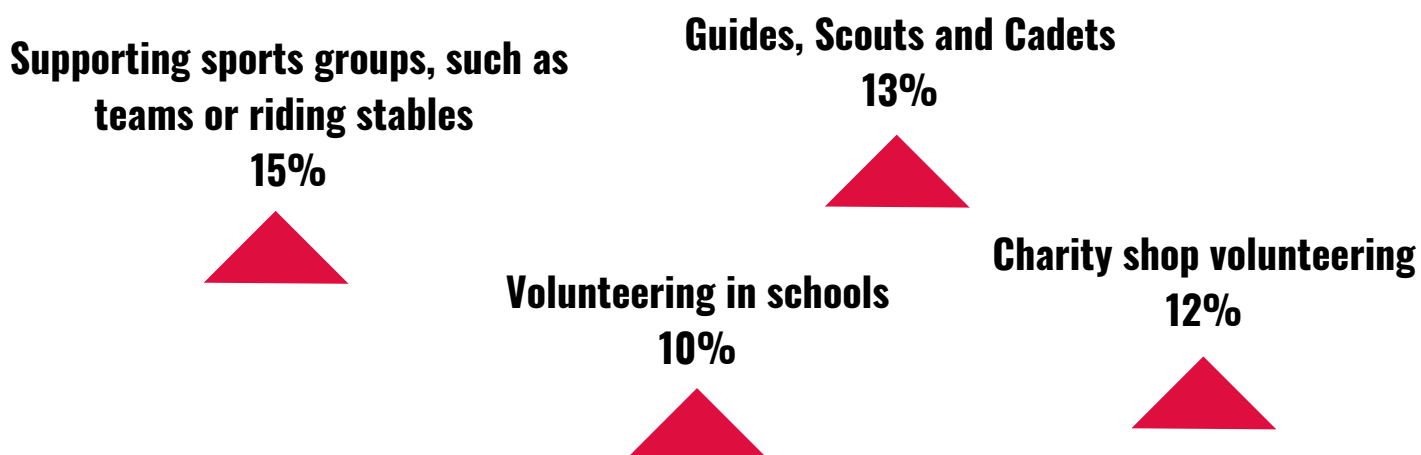


The most common ages people had started volunteering

Main reasons given to volunteer



239 respondents gave details of their first volunteering opportunity



Young people find out about volunteering opportunities through **friends and family** (30%); **school or university** (26%) and **through groups already involved in** (25%).

Benefits of volunteering



35%

of respondents had gained a qualification through volunteering



55%

of respondents had gained skills they would use in work



52%

noted that volunteering was something they could put on their CV



51%

had gained confidence



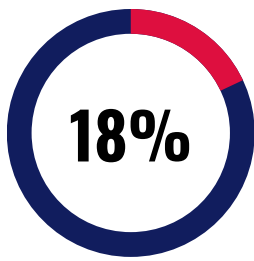
49%

had gained life experience

Benefits to the community

We asked young people to identify a time where their volunteering experience had had a positive impact on them or their community.

105 comments received identified a benefit to the respondents' wider community. Categories here include through fundraising; providing opportunities; working to alleviate poverty; or related directly to work with children and young people.

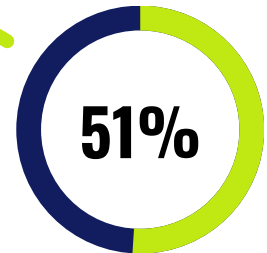


Of respondents had had a negative experience when volunteering, or trying to volunteer

Examples here include abuse from members of the public and poor communication from volunteering opportunities.

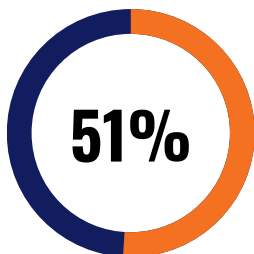


Those planning to continue volunteering when they reach age 25 or older



89% of those who had not volunteered said they would like to in the future.

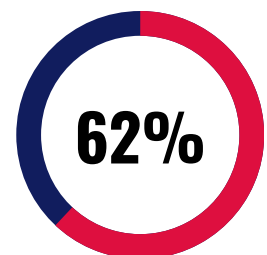
The most cited reasons for not volunteering were other responsibilities, the lack of interesting opportunities, and lack of time. Worries about volunteering not being a cool way to spend your time or just not being interested in volunteering were infrequently given.



Would be more likely to volunteer if they knew it would increase their chances of getting a job or supported entry into college or university



Thought volunteering was easy to get involved in
To make it easier, young people recommended....



Making it easier to find interesting opportunities
69%

Better links between schools and volunteering
67%

Demographics

Of the 436 respondents to this survey:

- 65% were female; 28% male
- 68% were white / white Scottish / white British; 8% Asian
- 24% reported a long-term illness or disability
- 28% had experience of being a young carer
- 10% had experience of being in care

23% of postcodes given were in the most deprived SIMD quintile; 19% in the second most deprived. 46% of respondents lived in large urban areas and 27% in other urban areas.

Respondents came from all 32 local authority areas in Scotland. Glasgow had the highest number of participants at 70 (16%) and the Shetland Isles the lowest number at 1 (0%).

Focus group overview

Following the survey, we worked collaboratively with YouthVIP panel members to co-develop and co-design focus groups that would target voices that had been underrepresented in the survey, and explore key themes that had emerged from the survey findings that we wanted to examine in more detail.

4 focus groups were organised in total: 2 in person and 2 online. The young people who took part were based in Dundee, Shetland, Dumfries and Galloway, and South Ayrshire.

Key findings suggest a mixed volunteering experience across Scotland, where many young people are motivated by skills development, CV building, and community contribution. However, significant barriers persist, including unclear opportunities, logistical challenges such as transport, time constraints, and a lack of relevance or interest in available roles.

The majority of respondents were aged:

14 (15%)

15 (16%)

18 (13%)

The research highlighted that young people want volunteering that is engaging, well-communicated, flexible, and rewarding. They seek opportunities that are social, supportive, and accessible.

As a result of the survey and focus group findings, 8 recommendations were constructed that should be considered and implemented going forward by organisations looking to recruit young volunteers. These recommendations stem and align directly from and with the views of the young people consulted during this research project.

What's next

The recommendations are:

- Be clear about what the volunteering opportunity is, what's involved and what will be expected of the volunteer, as well as what incentives/benefits there will be for the young volunteer.
- Train those in a volunteer management position (paid or voluntary) to be able to effectively support the needs of their young volunteers, including around the capacity and availability of young volunteers.
- Take volunteering opportunities directly to young people i.e. in schools and on social media.
- Create volunteering opportunities that allow young people to come with a friend or a group of young people where possible.
- Ensure young people gain recognition for the volunteering they're doing, whether that be through praise, feeling valued, or awards/accreditation.
- Offer a variety of quality opportunities for young people that are well communicated.
- Make your volunteering opportunities flexible and time appropriate to the other commitments of young people.
- Where possible, help young people with transport to access volunteering opportunities, by providing it yourself, or being understanding of the potentially limited transport infrastructure.

In order to mobilise the recommendations, we plan to:

- Deliver an event to launch the research report
- Share the findings with relevant audiences across the volunteering ecosystem and wider.
- Following an invitation, we will share the research at the 'Research conference: perspectives on Scotland's third sector impact' and the Scottish Network for Volunteering Research
- Use the learning to inform our YouthVIP work programme for 2025/2026

Utilise the findings as a resource to amplify young people's voices to influence volunteering infrastructure

Youth Engagement

Panel activity

In May 2024, we engaged the YouthVIP panel members from the previous phase individually to update them on the next phase of the project and to explore if they would like to remain involved. From these individual conversations 13 panel members indicated that they would like to remain part of the project moving forward.

Based on this information, we then delivered a fresh recruitment process to support the diversity of our panel group. This was delivered across June and July 2024 and was shared through the #YSHive landing page on the Young Scot platform (young.scot), a variety of social media channels, both paid for and organic promotion, and through local and national partner networks.

Following the application deadline we received 70 applications in total. All applicants were invited to an online selection session on Saturday 27th July where 35 young people attended. There were also 12 individual calls held with young people unable to attend the selection session. The recruitment process saw an offer being made to 15 new young people to join the YouthVIP Panel, enhancing panel membership to 28 young people aged 11-25. Of the 28 young people on the panel five identified as male, 21 identified as female and three as non-binary.



Session 31st August 2024

Following a volunteer induction process, the Panel participated in their first session on Saturday 31st August 2024 in Edinburgh, where they met each other in person and began to develop ideas for their annual event. They worked collaboratively to begin thinking about the look and feel of the event, its primary purpose and the activities that would take place. The young people worked in groups to begin sharing initial thoughts and then reflected as a whole group. There was clear agreement in terms of the style of the event and activities the young people would like to take place.

The young people also worked with Young Scot's Data and Insight Manager to refine the national consultation survey. The panel were led through the questions of the survey and ensured these were fit for purpose as well as making sure the responses to the questions covered all possible options.

The panel then focused on their Content Campaign, working in groups to begin initial ideas for content that can be hosted on the YouthVIP website and partner social media. They looked at content type – video, blogs, infographics, Social Media posts, case studies, newsletter, filming – linking to themes e.g. mental health, how I volunteer, how you ask about volunteering etc., who should be involved and the role they would like to take in the creation of this.



Session 5th October 2024

The panel's second session was held on Saturday 5th October 2024, where they focused on the creation of content for their campaign. The young people worked in groups to plan content based on their own experience of volunteering. The young people planned ideas such as 'a day in the life of a volunteer', 'the benefits of volunteering' and 'what they have developed through volunteering'.

The young people then began to refine their ideas for their event. In groups they reviewed their initial ideas and began to explore these further and think of what they wanted to achieve on the day, including the activities they would like delegates to take part in. The groups started to plan out how they saw the day playing out from start to finish, thinking about presentations, activity and roles. They then shared their ideas back to one another and from this refined the collation of ideas from each group they would like to take forward. The panel were clear that they wanted this to be a discussion day focusing on tackling barriers preventing young people volunteering and how these can be prevented.

Session 18th January 2025

The panel held a session on Saturday 18th January, where they focused on finalising the details of the discussion day. The young people identified the date for the discussion day and began creating a list of delegates they would like to invite to take part. The list included representatives from national organisations, local authorities, Scottish Government

and the education sector.

The group then focussed on finalising the activities and questions for the discussion day. The young people agreed on running a world café style activity that would see delegates rotate round six topic areas and give their response to questions relating to each. The panel identified key topic areas from the responses to the national survey and worked collaboratively to word the questions they would like the delegates to respond to.

The panel then worked together to develop a presentation for the discussion day and assigned roles for the day itself.



Session 1st March 2025

The final panel session was held on Saturday 1st March 2025, where they held a final run through and plans for the discussion day taking place on Thursday 6th March.

The session focused on giving the panel the opportunity to reflect on their journey through the project and what they have achieved. The panel reflected on their project journey including how they found out about the opportunity to join the panel, the experiences they have gained as part of the panel, the best thing about being a member of the panel, the most challenging part of their panel experience and how it has impacted their thoughts on volunteering.

The young people also reflected on the activity they have been involved in and delivered during this phase of the project. This included the YouthVIP Discussion

Moving forward into next year's programme, to build on the conversations from the YouthVIP Discussion Day, the panel will look to explore how the work of YouthVIP can be embedded within present organisations, and further opportunities for collaboration can be explored. It was evident from the day that delegates were keen for this to happen from their Action Cards (pledges and commitments for further work). Some of the pledges included:

- Linking in with YouthVIP to look at how we can encourage more volunteering and removing barriers preventing this
- Advocate more for accessible volunteering opportunities, focusing on age and wider barriers
- Look at how we proactively recruit from out with own organisation
- Include a YouthVIP session in our Volunteering Development Summit
- Collaboration with other organisations and involving young people to tackle the key issues

We look forward to building this into our delivery programme for 2025/26 and support the panel to excel within this area of focus.

Schools activity

The [Youth Volunteering in Schools Resource](#) was developed in 22-23 collaboratively with YouthVIP panel members and in 23-24 piloted with 3 schools across the country. This year our focus was to disseminate the resource to as many practitioners as possible.

The highlight of this effort was an online launch event held in October, attended by 45 practitioners. The launch event explored some of the key aspects of the resource such as the importance of partnership working between schools and local youth work, TSIs and national programmes and the benefits of embedding volunteering into the curriculum.

Case study

“Being part of the #YouthVIP panel has been one of the best experiences of my life. Having the chance to make change on a national scale whilst collaborating with other amazing and inspiring young people has been a truly unforgettable experience and one that I will always be so grateful to have had.

From my time on the panel, I have developed essential skills which have allowed me to become the best version of myself and set me up for my future. Most notably, my confidence has improved so much from being on the panel as I have went from someone who is really shy and introverted, who couldn't even raise her hand in class to answer a question, to being able to deliver a presentation at the #YouthVIP Summit at SCVO's The Gathering in front of people from the third sector, local authorities, education and Scottish Government.

The opportunities I have had the chance to be a part of as a result of my involvement with the #YouthVIP panel have been incredible and I have been lucky enough to take on different roles at the #YouthVIP Summit and Discussion Day, including filming social media content for social media channels, facilitating world café style events, and delivering a presentation on the journey of the #YouthVIP panel.”

-YouthVIP Panel Member

Contributors were able to bring these aspects to life by providing examples of good practice and their own experiences. A panel member took part in a Q&A to discuss the impact that their school had on their volunteering journey and how that has shaped their further education and career path. Another panel member highlighted how support from school staff to create a pupil volunteering ambassador role had a major impact on themselves, and also on the volunteering infrastructure of their school.

Additionally, we had a contribution from a volunteering development officer from Fife Voluntary Action who provided a great example of partnership working between themselves and a local high school in Kirkcaldy to completely revamp the volunteering opportunities for young people in that local community.

- Attended Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) celebration event 12th June 2024 and promoted the resource to 10 teachers.
- YPI Scotland Twitter account posted the resource (they have 6,639 followers) and it was included in their newsletter sent out in August 2024, and will soon feature as a resource on their website.
- Presented to PKAVS Volunteer Managers Network on 10th July 2024 – including sharing the resource and running some activities within it.
- Presented at the Youth Work and Schools Collaborative which had 50 people in attendance and the launch event was shared and explained. The information was subsequently sent around the network
- The resource has been added to the Padlet used by SCQF for their Pupils Ambassador Programme schools and shared on their X account

Value of Partnerships

The task of supporting and embedding volunteering within the school curriculum doesn't have to be one that is taken on by the school alone. Working with community organisations, youth work services and charities open so many more doors for young people

There are numerous examples of strong partnership working that have really enhanced the offer and opportunities around volunteering in schools. Working with community organisations who have experience, resources and programmes in place, can be either a great first step taken by schools or a way to further build on their volunteering infrastructure

DYW Developing the Young Workforce

YS Hive

ypi Youth Philanthropy Initiative

ENABLE Scotland

Key Takeaways

- Small actions count
- Partnership working is an excellent way to develop your volunteering infrastructure
- Volunteering enriches the curriculum, and when embedded within, it really can help every young person achieve in a way that's meaningful to them
- Volunteering is a tool that can reduce the attainment gap, increase positive destination options and improve employability skills
- Volunteering in schools can be co-designed, shaped and led by young people
- There is no one size fits all model, each school must do what works for them based on resources, community engagement and capacity

In addition to the launch event, we've worked to get the resource into the hands of those who can benefit from it the most. This has included:

- Shared on social media channels during Volunteers Week 3-7 June 2024



Case study

We received very positive feedback after the event and key messaging around the onus not all being on the school and teachers, but that reaching out to youth work and other organisations to majorly improve the volunteering infrastructure and opportunities for pupils, was strongly noted from attendees.

The impact of hearing directly from young people was noted heavily when asked in the evaluation what the best part of the event was: "Listening to the experience of a young person - it was inspirational"

Real examples being provided was also a key feature of the positive feedback received, "I wasn't fully aware of it before I joined the training however the knowledge gained has been really valuable and the opportunity to link with FVA for example has been great."

Learning Practice

Training

Our 'Recruiting and Retaining Young Volunteers' Training programme has had another successful roll out this year, with high levels of attendance, engagement during the session and feedback around the use of tools and frameworks. In delivering this training under YouthVIP, we always aim to leave attendees with practical ideas and options that they can embed into their existing volunteer practice. Across the year we have delivered:

4

Online training sessions

83

Attendees engaged across these sessions

70%

Sign up converting to attendance rate

16

Local Authority (TSI) areas represented

26

National organisations represented

Training Insights

Over the duration of the programme year we have seen more attendance from National (pan-Scotland/UK) organisations filling the training spots. This trend began over 23/24 programme year, and has very much continued this upward trajectory. 50% of the open training session slots have been filled by national organisations, including the likes of NHS Scotland, and staff from Scottish universities. This trend shows a demand for this training outside the confines of the voluntary/third sector, and that the practice of engaged young volunteers has an impact across the public and private sector too.

We continue to be buoyed by the positive conversion rates from booking to attending our training sessions, suggesting a highly motivated learning cohort. For learning sessions across the UK, we know that rates for online events sit around 35%-45% booking to showing up. YouthVIP training attendance rate for 24/25 sits at 83%.

Our sessions filled up with reasonable marketing and networking push, and we found word of mouth to be the most powerful tool in people finding our support. Session numbers were capped at 20 for online sessions to give maximum learner impact.



Reassuring to hear a lot of what we are talking about is in line with these thoughts. Great to also chat to other people from other organisations.

Loved it. It felt like it should be a longer session - so much great learning. I'd like to sit through it again now - so many areas to explore for myself and my team, 11 out of 10

An excellent session, I am leaving feeling inspired with lots of ideas to take forward. Thank you

Top priorities for organisation from training: (feedback from training participants)

Develop existing work to involve more young people. Engage with more young people. Make volunteering relevant to younger audience. Encourage organisations to involve younger volunteers, particularly those under 16.

Researching how to reach young volunteers for our company and finding more responsibility in the long term for them. Keeping them engaged.

Engage more with younger volunteers, incentives which are more suited to young people

Continue to think of the value added to the young people through being youth volunteer, and develop opportunities to include them in wider organisation running

Creative approaches - what's in it for Young People:

- Listen and validate to their experiences
- Create WITH not FOR Young People
- Getting our 'ask' right before involving young people

Community of Practice

Our ambition over 2024/25 was to embed and grow our Community of Practice, which was launched over 23/24 programme year. Given the high engagement across YouthVIP training, our Community of Practice sought to give those highly engaged in the topic an opportunity to connect and learn with other likeminded individuals across Scotland.

As part of this year, 3 Community of Practice sessions were planned. We held two sessions on 25/9/24 and 7/11/24. Our third session was booked

for 20/2/25, however this was cancelled due to external circumstances and not rescheduled due to it's proximity to the end of the reporting year and low engagement from core community members.

For the two sessions which were delivered, we had 34 attendees from across Scotland, representing 11 Local Authority (TSI) Areas, including 10 National organisations represented.



Community of practice insight

Our YouthVIP Community of Practice launched in January 2024 and identified the following 3 priorities across volunteer practitioners in Scotland:

**Community, connection
and partnerships**

**Influencing and
innovation**

**Preparing ourselves and
young people for
volunteering**

In Community of Practice 1 session in September 2024 we had to revisit the priorities that were previously agreed since 8 months had passed since last engagement. Once we had confirmed those priorities remained the correct ones, the group selected the top 4 'Community, Connection & Partnership' priorities. They were:

1. Training- build a team of young people in our organisations that can share the impact of young volunteering, and the benefits!
2. Partner with other organisations to create multiple opportunities
3. Co-produce opportunities with young people (not for them)
4. Develop greater support/understanding so organisations will recruit young volunteers

The group then selected the top 4 'Influencing and Innovation' priorities:

1. Evidence base for Impact of Youth Volunteering (YV) - on individuals, organisations, social benefit etc. Numbers of orgs and participants in YV
2. Create a suite of success stories in video format that we can share across our organisations and use in internal training and awareness sessions.
3. Working with young volunteers to create impactful change within the organisation and externally.
4. Raise profile by sharing good news stories/case studies.

The group then selected the top 3 'Preparing Ourselves and Young People for Volunteering' priorities:

1. Learning from each other and sharing/developing resources
2. Opportunities to work together to develop resources accessible to all.
3. Sharing best practice

During the 2nd Community of Practice session on 7/11/24, the group undertook a design thinking process to explore 'effective ways of sharing youth volunteering in our organisations. This approach was chosen by the Community of Practice group as the first priority that they'd like to explore at depth. Findings from this topic were centred around some key themes:

What are the benefits to young people of youth volunteering?

- An opportunity to explore strengths and skills – good for their CV
- Leadership skills development; employability; improves their attainment
- Builds Confidence. Meet people they wouldn't normally meet. Learn from others, perhaps people with different interests or experiences
- Meet new people and learn new skills
- Potential to effect change within organisations
- Sense of community and wellbeing from giving back and feeling included
- Qualifications and work experience as a reward
- Testing future career options

What are the benefits to organisations / communities from Youth Volunteering?

- A different point of View. Passionate community giving back to likeminded individuals
- More volunteers – increased capacity to deliver targets
- Advocates for our work
- Grow your own! Volunteers can move into staff team when ready and opportunities arise
- Including young people in the delivery of our services, different perspective and impact
- How to gain intergenerational acceptance of the skills which young people have which can be of benefit
- Young vols are relatable for young people and have walked in their shoes

Internal to my organisation, who needs to know about these benefits and why?

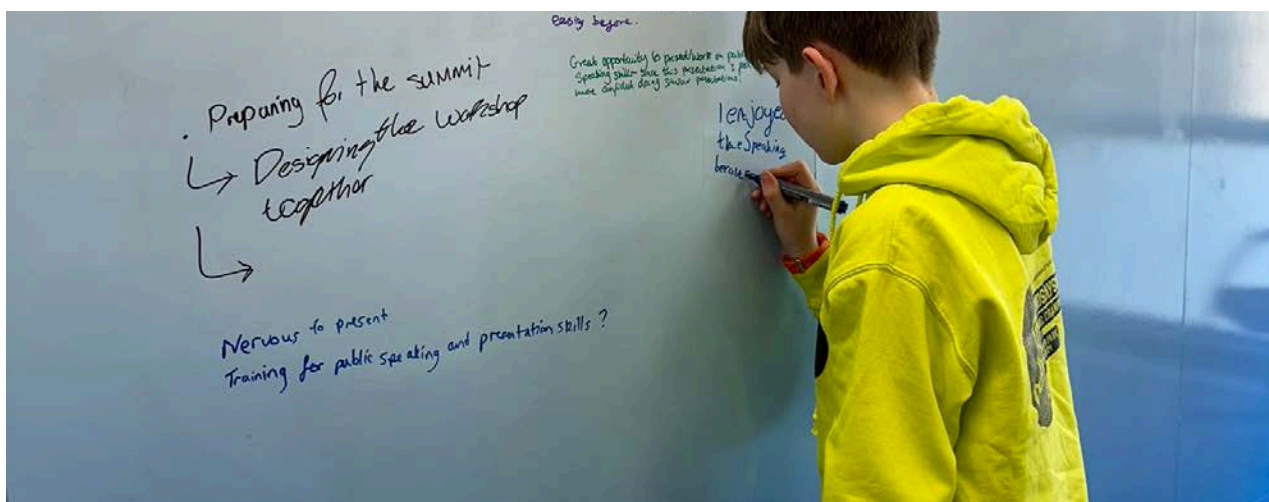
- Colleagues - workers who will be working with them and may feel extra responsibilities as a result

- Manager and team leaders - can filter down to all staff in support and supervision
- Senior managers - to ensure commitment and resource
- Participants - need to understand the difference in youth volunteers to youth participants
- Board /Trustees
- Other (older) volunteers who will be working alongside and supporting younger volunteers

What are the effective ways of sharing this information with our stakeholders?

- Some of our young people speak at AGMs and events and share their experiences
- A mix of media and approaches for intended audiences, public facing and internal frameworks - we use animations
- Case studies from young people and the benefits of volunteering to them
- Some of our Young people have made videos explaining their volunteering journeys
- We have used features on social media
- Volunteering forum focused on youth volunteering
- The importance of peer-to-peer feedback: giving the young people a platform to share their experiences

The above information gathered from sessions 1 and 2 paints a picture of participants who understand the complex landscape of youth volunteering, and see great opportunity to improve practice and experience in this area. This information gives us a deep level of understanding around how to focus learning in programme year 25/26 to ensure we meet organisations where they are at, and focus on areas which will have maximum impact around the area of youth volunteering. All Community of Practice sessions shared to the full presentation deck, findings and contact details with each of the participants.



Community of Practice Next Steps

This year has provided a stark learning around delivering online Community of Practice networks in our ambition to grow the size of this network. Ultimately our efforts of trying to grow this network has been time consuming and ultimately ineffective.

The 8-month gap between community launch in January 2024 and next session follow-up in September 2024 meant we lost a huge amount of traction that was built over the prior 12 months. Many of the core group who drove the vision for the Community of Practice had moved role or changed job focus over that timescale and we had to essentially start again in September 2024 with a new, smaller and less committed group. They were not able to mobilise their own networks behind the Community of Practice like the original group were.

It was time intensive to ascertain from the core group if they were able to continue and startlingly they were unable to point to anyone within their organisation to replace them within the Community of Practice. They spoke of a frustration to win over key stakeholders within their own organisations and 2 previous coaching clients cited a lack of specific support like we provided last time to be a reason why. They were unable to keep the fire lit under youth volunteering – a sign that external practical support in this area is absolutely key.

In seeking to identify new members of the Community of Practice, we identified that many participants lacked a clear understanding of what a community of practice is or does. They cited needing less work to do rather than more and hence weren't keen to engage.

As a result, it is clear the current format and composition of the Community of Practice is not delivering against our ambitions for growth and group learning on youth volunteering, and therefore we should take the opportunity to consider how best to achieve our goals moving forward. Currently, we believe the online 'whole nation' format of the group is not drawing interest or commitment, and therefore for the 25/26 YouthVIP programme year we will consider alternative options to embed youth volunteering practice outside our original intent of a Community of Practice.

Communication

Stakeholder communications

With such an engaged, diverse and far reaching community, YouthVIP wants to make sure we are able to support and offer a range of opportunities to build capacity and knowledge around youth volunteering throughout Scotland: whether that be across young people themselves, the local community, or the local authority.

Engagements, talks, presentations and community of practice style workshops have allowed us to further embed our insight and knowledge into these local community networks and support the teams that work on the ground to support volunteering activity.

West Dunbartonshire Community Volunteer Service (WDCVS)

YouthVIP hosted two of their workshop rooms to investigate, discuss and share opportunities to help get more young people get involved in volunteering. We have continued this relationship beyond the sessions themselves by building more 'localised' networks within the community.



Fife Voluntary Action (FVA)

FVA have been involved with YouthVIP through training sessions, teams chats, a forum group session and Community Of Practice follow up, the championing and sharing of their phenomenal work with their own superb 'volunteer schools' project and involvement and guidance provided to our 'schools resource toolkit'. -

"You may be pleased to hear we will be launching our Volunteer Managers Youth Volunteering training (based on your YouthVIP materials) as a regular offer on our training programme in Fife" – Linda Watson, Head of Volunteering Development, FVA.



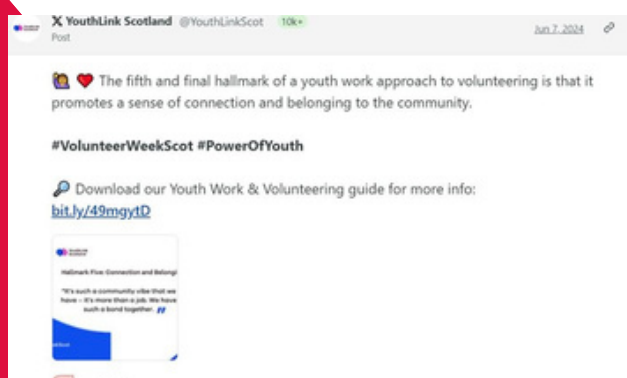
Forth Valley Volunteers, Clackmannanshire (CTSI)

A chance to introduce YouthVIP and the services we can offer at their Volunteer Services 'Community Breakfast'. Lots of fantastic organisations within this area looking to develop young people and their own volunteering practices. Lots of help and support via the sharing of contacts and the various resource toolkits.

"Thanks for coming and giving a great talk today. The feedback has been great. Looking forward to future collaborations." – Chris White, Volunteer Development Officer.

Volunteer Midlothian

A presentation of the YouthVIP services, training, support and development opportunities available at their Volunteer Managers Forum. An opportunity to network, meet local organisations looking for support and to hear about the services YouthVIP can provide that might be of benefit to themselves. “Thank you so much for meeting with us yesterday, I know the guys in my team have found it extremely valuable! I love it how sometimes you cross paths with someone who really has an incredible passion for the work they do and this is definitely you – this really brightens my day in return!” – Jenna McCandlish, Active Schools Coordinator.



With a broad range of 'toolkit' resources, in-depth training, a wealth of experience throughout the YouthVIP Partnership, and the individual members of the YouthVIP panel, along with an endless list of contacts within this huge volunteering community, we wanted to ensure the impact and learning were not only offered to those we could work with in person....

We now produce a 'YouthVIP bi-monthly newsletter' that goes out exclusively to all registered contacts within our network, all subscribers to the website, and everyone who attends our training sessions. In addition to this, our partners at volunteer-led organisations across Scotland share our newsletters with their own respective communities, ensuring an even wider reach.

The newsletter contains updates of what's been going on in and around the YouthVIP community network. Some anecdotal feedback and key diary dates and of course what the YouthVIP Panel members have been doing or are involved in. This newsletter comes complete with links to various discussion points and bookable services provided through our partnership network.

In broadening out our network and joining together the dots through communication, we have been focussing on the opportunities this brings to mobilise our youth panel members into local speaking opportunities. The ambition behind this is not just to ensure young people are represented in spaces where conversation focusses on them, but elevating and spotlighting youth voice and lived experience.

Two members of the YouthVIP panel have been nominated to attend the 'Royal Garden Party' in July for their amazing contribution to the YouthVIP panel, the partnership and everything that they both champion as young volunteers themselves.

YouthLink Scotland ran a communications campaign during Volunteers Week 2024 which ran from 3rd – 9th June, highlighting YouthLink Scotland's 'Hallmarks of a Youth Work Approach to Volunteering' across the week. Focus was given to the Youth Volunteering Schools Resource and some of the amazing work being done by the #IWill movement in Scotland during this campaign. 3 YouthVIP panel members also had case studies featured on Volunteer Scotland's website during the week.

The campaign delivered 20 posts over the week, receiving almost 8,000 impressions and 170 engagements, showing the content was relevant, engaging and insightful in showcasing the link between youth work and volunteering activity in young people. Many of the themes covered in the hallmarks were also reflected in the findings of our youth research – showing the connectedness of our focus and messaging.

Conclusion and Next Steps



As we hope we have exemplified throughout this report, the partnership has worked hard this year to engage with our communities around the purpose and priorities of our work. Much of this year has involved asking, listening and reflecting, and we're delighted that young volunteers themselves have led most of this work.

The strength of the partnership across delivery organisations has continued to grow as we deliver cross-functional projects, and have taken the opportunity to share learnings within our respective delivery areas for maximum impact of the project.

We are thrilled to have confirmation of funding for 25/26, which will allow us to truly embed the spirit of our research findings across Scotland, providing real and lasting change for youth volunteering nationally.

This, coupled with engagement of all TSIs and many national VIOs, ensures we have a strong platform to share and embed youth voice.

We have moved into 25/26 excited for the future of YouthVIP, striving to provide sustainability for youth volunteering, to be able to continue to grow, and be engaging, supportive, inclusive and meaningful for all young people in Scotland. Most importantly, we will keep young people at the heart of our work, remaining accountable to their vision and central tenants within our recently delivered research project.



About us

YouthVIP is a multi-organisation initiative, made up of Volunteering Matters, YouthLink Scotland, and Young Scot, existing to promote inclusive and participatory youth volunteering across Scotland. Formed from 13 recommendations made by young people from the Youth Volunteering Innovation Project (Youth VIP) to the Scottish Government in 2020, we now work with organisations, Local Government and young people to make this vision a reality.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot