

#youthVIP



Annual Report

2025/26

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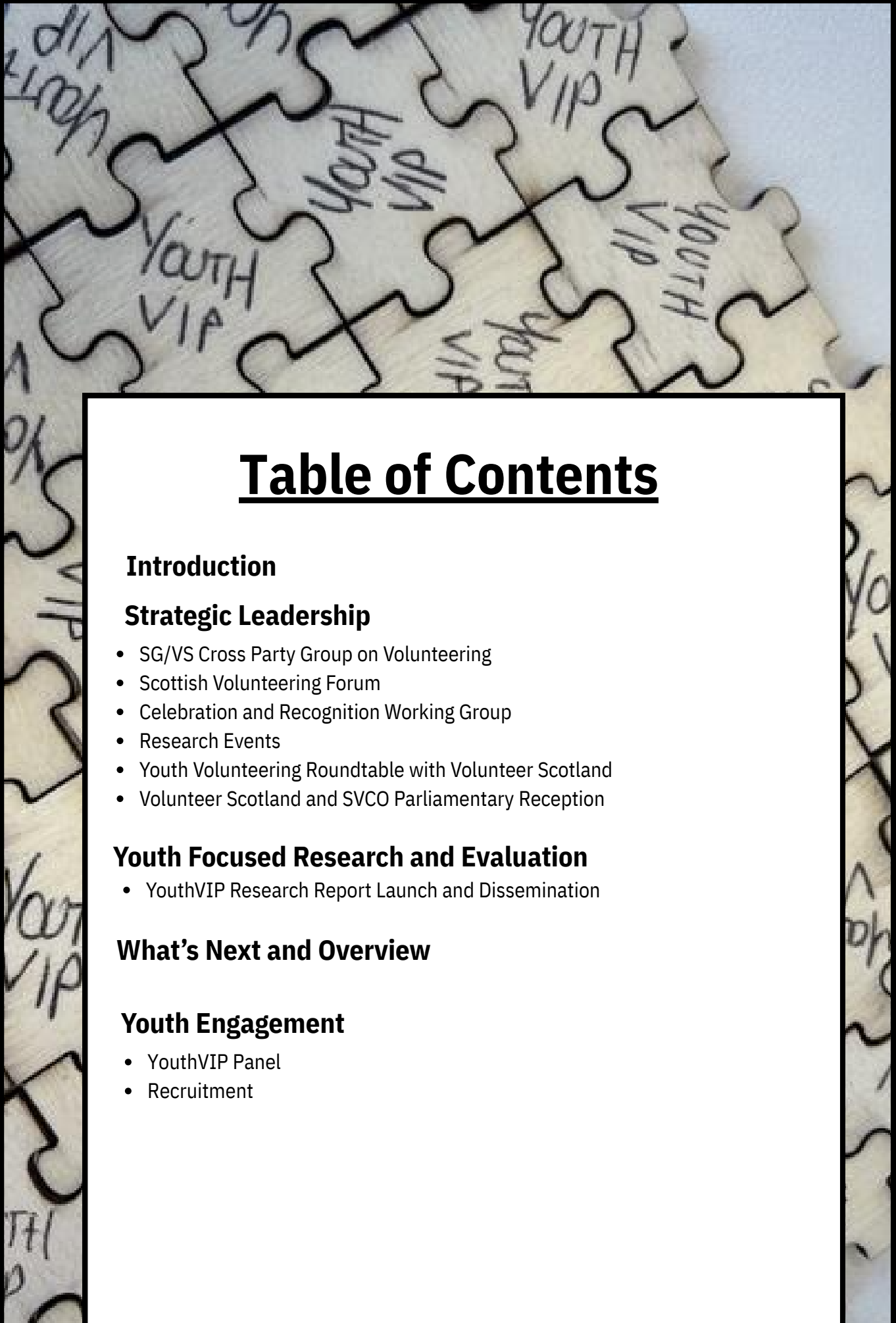


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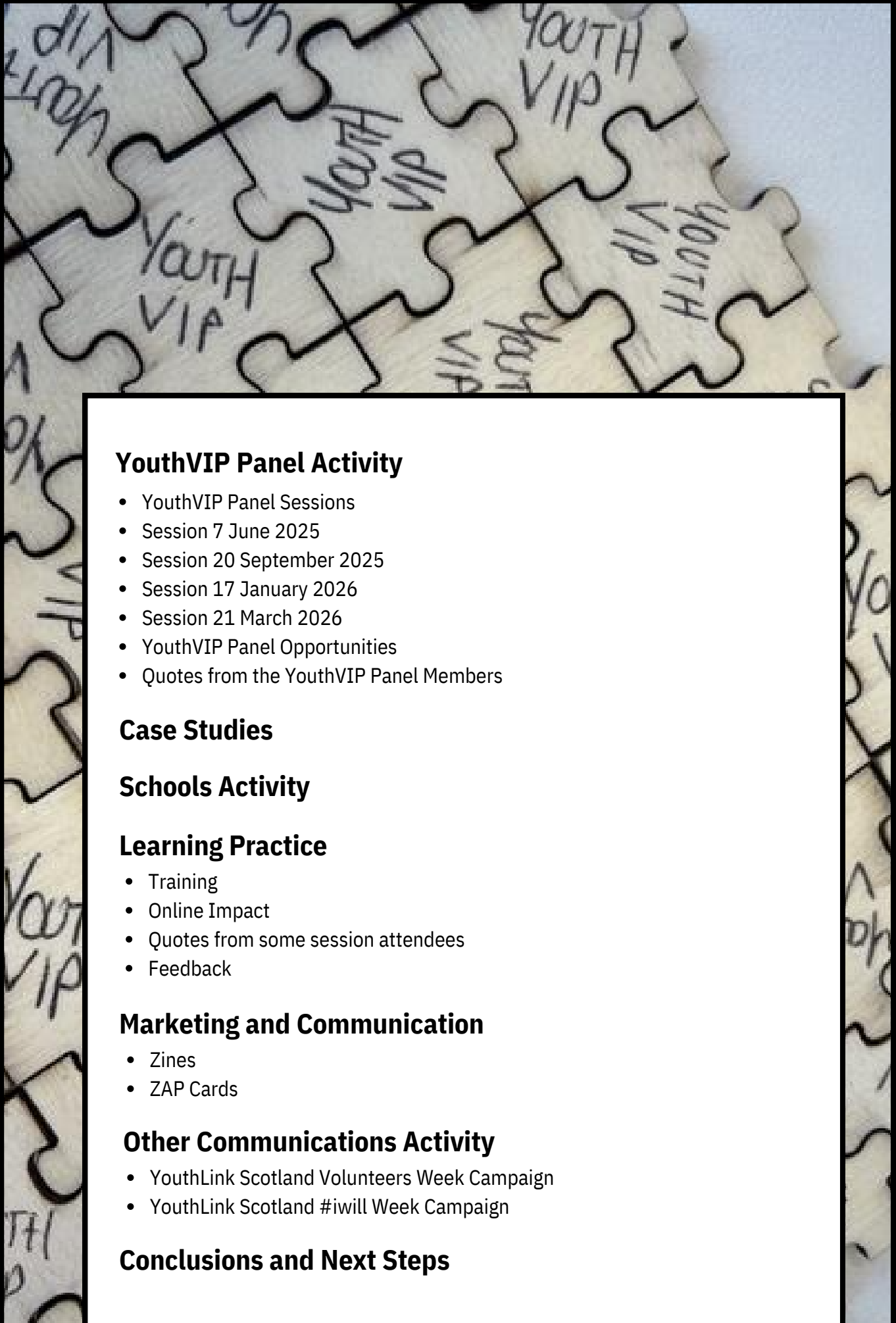
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Introduction

This annual report to the Scottish Government summarises YouthVIP's work across 2025/26 to strengthen youth volunteering in Scotland through youth-led insight, strategic influence and practical support to the volunteering ecosystem. During a busy year we remained focused on the programme's original ambition: to make volunteering clearer, more inclusive and more meaningful for young people, while helping organisations create opportunities that work in practice.

Key successes within this YouthVIP partnership of Volunteering Matters, Young Scot, and YouthLink this year included embedding the findings and nine recommendations from our 2024/25 research (Young People's Perspectives on Volunteering) across our engagement and delivery; convening partners through a co-hosted Youth Volunteering Roundtable with Volunteer Scotland to agree practical 'where next?' actions; and expanding learning and development offers, including refreshed Impact Sessions. We also increased the reach of youth voice through dissemination activity and through youth participation in national networks and influencing spaces, including the Saltire Awards Steering Group, the Scottish Volunteering Forum, and contributions to the Institute of Directors (Scotland) Manifesto for Change. Alongside this strategic work, the YouthVIP panel continued to grow and diversify, contributing 165 volunteering hours across four sessions and taking on high-profile opportunities that developed their confidence, facilitation and leadership.

Our learning reinforces that progress depends on sustained collaboration and on putting young people's lived experience at the centre of design and decision-making. Partners consistently told us that sharing practice across organisations is valuable, and that barriers (time, flexibility, accessibility, communications and support to take the first step) remain persistent, particularly for young people from more deprived communities. We also learned that targeted, relationship-based approaches can be more effective than one-size-fits-all models, for example, in our schools Community of Practice pilot, where differing readiness and capacity shaped what was possible. Looking ahead to 2026/27, YouthVIP will build on these insights by deepening partnerships, tailoring support offers, and continuing to amplify youth voice so that Scotland's volunteering infrastructure can deliver equitable, meaningful opportunities for all young people.

Strategic Leadership

In what has been an exceptionally busy year for YouthVIP across Scotland we remain true to our continued passion to support young people into the wider volunteering world. Providing a clearer picture of this volunteering world and help to understand what volunteering means for everyone involved- how to put it in place, make it work smarter and support development opportunities from the ground up.

Whilst the original recommendations to Government & guidelines, created in 2019, that YouthVIP was founded on remain true to our drive and focus, we undertook a new research report in 2024-25, launched in June 2025- **'Young People's' Perspectives on Volunteering'**.

We know a lot has changed over this time, and therefore it is only right that we took the opportunity to adapt and evolve our programme to accommodate these changes. This has allowed us a renewed focus, alignment across key challenges, and prioritisation with supporting key communities moving forward to include the nine recommendations provided by the young people who participated in the report. These key elements have been threaded through our work. Meetings, introductions, our talks, presentations all have this presence in all aspects of our work through projects like the much asked for 'Impact Sessions' and the schools' 'Community of Practice'.

Engagement

Fife Voluntary Action & YouthVIP commissioned an application for Fife Secondary schools to become part of a 'Community of Practice' pilot study (more details of which can be found in the schools activity section below). This is part of the pilot project ongoing between FVA & YouthVIP. Mapping out a strategy to develop and strengthen relationships even further within the surrounding communities directly linked to volunteering around these immediate secondary schools. The long-term aim of this project is to make volunteering accessible for everyone in Secondary Schools and supporting and bringing networks within the community closer together through raised awareness.

We would be delighted if you would possibly be a guest speaker to deliver an overview of national youth volunteering strategy and youth volunteering updates.

CVS Falkirk & YouthVIP have worked together to present why opportunities for young people in volunteering are so important. Talking with local groups about overcoming objectives, the sharing of ideas and helping to provide links within the community and make volunteering even more accessible for everyone. An ongoing supportive partnership for all involved and we look forward to seeing this relationship grow even stronger in 26-27.

Amazing to hear that we can work together on this 😊

Engage Renfrewshire & YouthVIP got together at one of their amazing Volunteer forums held locally for VIO's. An opportunity to present what goes on with YouthVIP, an understanding of the service that we can provide and an opportunity to have a chat and ask questions about the possibilities available within their remits.

It was brilliant to have YouthVIP involved in the Forum on Wednesday. The session was really well received, with lots of positive chat during and after, so thank you again for taking the time to be part of it.

Highland TSI & YouthVIP got together on a call after a meeting at another conference (Generations Working Together's) Annual Conference & Award, Inverness) to discuss opportunities of support, development and involvement in the future. The Highland TSI team are very busy making connections and linking in local opportunities with their 'Volunteer Academy'. We look forward to supporting opportunities in the future now that the connection has been made.

“ It was great to talk to you yesterday. I felt quite inspired afterwards. You mentioned the training that you can offer to VIO's around working with young people, it would be much appreciated if we could share those links and we will pop them out the Volunteer Academy (VA) website. ”

Volunteer Glasgow & YouthVIP have been having in-depth conversations throughout this year regarding young people in the volunteering world:.. how to get more people actively involved, overcoming barriers, searching out positive partners and building an stronger network YouthVIP has been able to support their fantastic 'Inclusive Volunteering Events' where not only have we been present, shared YouthVIP workings and spoken to a fantastic amount of attendees at each event, we have also had the opportunity to be part of a q&a session for delegates at the most recent event, helping to break down barriers to bringing young people in to volunteering.

“Thanks again for everything you have done for the IVE. It was fantastic to have your input on the lead up and then fantastic presentation and insights on the day and thanks for the additional info and offer of continued support.”

PKC (Youth Strategy Group): YouthVIP were invited in to join this highly proactive and productive group of VIO's in and around Perth & Kinross. Helping to support a strong network, make connections and share the fantastic work being done by everyone. A fantastically positive example of how teamwork across all of the local organisations comes together to support each other and those they work with. We were very kindly given the opportunity to speak about YouthVIP:, who we are, what we do and how we can help and have had some great links come out of this for future development.

“ Thanks for sharing, Fraser. A lot of work clearly into the reports and delivery of volunteering opportunities. ”

Key Partner work - Volunteer Scotland & YouthVIP

Under the refreshed Volunteer Action Plan agenda, we have been working with Volunteer Scotland to focus on addressing the youth volunteering decline as a key element to civic participation across Scotland. The key milestone within this has been the delivery of a co-hosted roundtable event between YouthVIP and Volunteer Scotland, facilitated by YouthVIP panel members, to understand the existing landscape of youth volunteering, and to set the context for 'where next?' and how key partners can play a greater role in achieving increased outcomes.

Early in partnership conversations, it was clear there had been (and continues to be) a focus on the barriers to youth participation in volunteering, however we were always clear in working together that a good outcome would be to understand the practical steps which could be taken to move this conversation forward, in an attempt to lift these barriers and make progress.

The roundtable explored three key questions:

Q1: What prevents you from engaging young people in volunteering opportunities, individually and as an organisation?

Q2: What support or information would be useful for organisations to engage with young people, what can you offer to support this, and what do you need?

Q3: How can we ensure that young people are included in conversations and decisions about them?

We engaged around 15 volunteer involving organisations in this roundtable event and gained broad agreement that moving forward, whilst embedding young peoples' voices and lived experiences, will be crucial to ensure we're not continuing to have the same conversation repeatedly.

Feedback from the event has been positive, including that it was refreshing to share practice across the group and consider actions and influence that could come from the organisations involved.

We now start the 2026-2027 YouthVIP programme year in the exciting position of having key priority areas to explore collaboratively between Volunteer Scotland and YouthVIP, again focussing on practical delivery, that we believe will alleviate some of the stresses and focus on the great wealth of opportunities which comes with embracing young people as volunteers throughout the sector in Scotland.

Institute of Directors & YouthVIP

In partnership with the Institute of Directors (Scotland) we were delighted to have our panel feed their comments and insights into the IoD's 2026 Manifesto for Change. Working with YouthVIP, the IoD were keen to gain a 'young person's perspective' to the areas of focus identified by their members. These included access to opportunities, rural infrastructure, transport and the economy.

Working with the panel, we were able to shape questions to help them share their volunteering experiences under each of these headings – what worked well, and what needed to be shared with the upcoming political administration so they could understand young peoples' experiences. The perspectives of young people helped to showcase a broader perspective on key critical matters for Scotland.

The release of the manifesto was covered in national newspapers including The Herald's Business HQ, and The Scotsman.

Social Enterprise Scotland & YouthVIP

We were delighted to partner with Social Enterprise Scotland to deliver a session to their members around youth volunteering perspectives and opportunities. We had over 30 network members join the virtual session where two of our panel members spoke directly about their volunteering experiences: how they got involved in volunteering; what they gained from volunteering; and their advice for those looking to engage more young people in volunteering activities.

We know that many social enterprises across Scotland rely on the support and effort of volunteers to make their operations viable, and therefore this was a key audience for us to position ourselves with. We're exploring how we can do more together in 2026-2027.

Scottish Volunteering Forum

YouthVIP has contributed to Scottish Volunteering Forum, sharing findings of the YouthVIP research, emphasising the needs of young volunteers and the youth work sector, and influencing and connecting with wider developments including PVG Scheme stakeholder discussions, Volunteer Scotland's VAP refocus, TSI Networks' priorities.

Research Events

Working alongside the YouthVIP panel to share the findings and process of the 2024-2025 research with stakeholders interested in research on the voluntary sector and on volunteering.

Saltire Awards Steering Group (SG)

YouthVIP were invited to be part of the Saltire Awards Steering Group this year where we have been able to share our knowledge and experience of youth volunteering, as well as bring in the voice and perspectives of young people through our YouthVIP panel. With both 'lowering the age of application' and 'reviewing marketing content and materials' the steering group invited participation and involvement of the YouthVIP panel, some questions asked and some answers shared, all of which were fed back to the group. This represents a great trust and the opportunity to further embed young people's voice and participation when called upon.

Celebration and Recognition Working Group

YouthVIP is engaged with Volunteer Scotland's Volunteer Action Plan working group on celebration and recognition. The focus of the group is on Volunteers Week and other routes to recognising and celebrating volunteers. We ensure that there are opportunities to promote youth volunteering in this space, including Power of Youth Day as part of Volunteers Week.

Volunteer Scotland and SCVO Parliamentary Reception

Two YouthVIP panel members, alongside YouthVIP staff attended the joint parliamentary reception where colleagues stressed the importance and impact of volunteering to Scotland's economy.

Some of YouthVIP's other conversations and active involvement within the TSI and VIO community have seen stronger and more involved introductions and conversations with, Dumfries and Galloway, Borders Community Action, Perthshire TSI, Generations Working Together, DVVA, Nature Scot, RNLI, Aberlour and Police Scotland to name but a few, as well as a host of more localised VIO's and their individual staff and teams when out and about.

To further enhance and develop this support, YouthVIP have completed a mapping tool which will allow us build on strengths of past and continuing work, investigate further and then take forward new development in a way that builds continuous and strengthening success of these ongoing relationships for everyone involved. We now leap ahead into 2026-2027 knowing that the young person's voice is louder still, the messages even stronger, the support and participation more widely available and the opportunities endless for everyone involved in supporting young people into volunteering.

Youth-Focused Research and Evaluation

YouthVIP Research Report Launch and Dissemination

The research report: 'Young People's Perspectives on Volunteering' was completed, based on the survey analysis by Young Scot and the focus group reflection day with the YouthVIP panel and YouthLink Scotland's senior researcher, during which recommendations were developed, based on the data analysis. The draft report was shared with panel members who gave valuable feedback, including the importance of adding a recommendation about accessibility and inclusive practice.

The research launch event was held online on 18th June 2025. It was planned with and delivered by the panel members. The whole panel shaped the elements of the event, interaction with the audience and how to get the recommendations across in a meaningful way. We had a lot of interest in the event with 93 sign-ups and a good attendance.

The feedback was very positive about the event and the findings of the report.

Key learnings from the event included:

- **"More youth involvement in promoting and structuring options for youth volunteering."**
- **"The importance of youth voice and feedback in their volunteering."**
- **"How to support more meaningful introductions to volunteering"**

Feedback also highlighted how some organisations were going to implement their key learnings from the event and report in practice:

- **"We will change how we are advertising the opportunities for young people to join in with by not only sharing on social media as we do, but actually go into youth groups etc and utilise partners more"**
- **"We're going to think more about how volunteering opportunities are presented to young people and if volunteer recruitment materials aimed for young people can be adapted - seek their views as well when doing this!"**
- **"More youth involvement in promoting and structuring options for youth volunteering."**

Research Report Dissemination

- Research conference: perspectives on Scotland's third sector impact, Voluntary Sector Studies Network and Third Sector Research Forum – panel members leading workshop discussions. (45 workshop participants)
- Scottish Network for Volunteering Research Network, Volunteer Scotland - with panel members (12 attendees)
- Scottish Volunteering Forum (15 attendees)
- Generations Working Together Annual Conference (77 attendees)
- Awards Network Meeting (18 attendees)
- YouthLink Scotland briefing (1750 recipients)
- YouthVIP Newsletter (161 recipients)
- Volunteer Scotland Policy Champions Network bulletin
- Youth Volunteering Roundtable (partnership with Volunteer Scotland) (16 participants)
- The report is linked to from SCVO and a number of TSI websites

Dissemination by email, on social media and further opportunities to continue.

The impact of this has been widespread dissemination of up-to-date young people's perspectives on volunteering, at a time when youth volunteering is of particular interest in the volunteering ecosystem.

We have been able to amplify young people's voices even when those messages might be difficult for organisations to hear, such as:

"just never found it interesting"

"the communication of opportunities is awful"

"what you get out of it can be vague"

Providing this data and recommendations to the system helps organisations to plan, prioritise and motivate resourcing for youth volunteering.

Scotland's Poverty Related Youth Volunteering Gap - Paper

YouthLink Scotland carried out a deep dive into the 24-25 research data to explore the challenges facing young people from the most deprived areas. Through focused analysis of our survey responses from SIMD 1 + 2, it became clear that young people from the most deprived areas in Scotland face more barriers to accessing high quality volunteering opportunities.

Our research report found, of those who had completed our survey;

“young people surveyed from SIMD 1 + 2 are twice as likely to have never volunteered when compared to young people in general – 22% compared to 11%. The research report also found that of those young people who have never volunteered before, 24% of those from SIMD 1 + 2 would like to volunteer compared to 18% generally.”

Scotland's Poverty Related Youth Volunteering Gap, linking with previous work done by YouthLink Scotland on youth work and volunteering and careers support, sets out key areas that must be tackled, and how the research report recommendations and a youth work approach are ways of breaking down some of these barriers.

The paper highlighted challenges we need to address in order to create more equitable and inclusive volunteering opportunities:

- Making time for unpaid work
- The need for flexibility
- Addressing differentials in social capital
- Communicating the value and benefits of volunteering

These insights can be seen as a challenge to the volunteering infrastructure to work towards reducing barriers to volunteering for young people from more deprived communities. Our research helps us understand that young people want to volunteer, particularly if it will help them to progress, and we already know that these young people have more to gain through volunteering in terms of building social capital, personal development and readiness for education or employment than their more affluent peers.

The report was published and shared during Scottish Careers Week 2025. It was subsequently shared in the Volunteer Scotland Policy Champions Network Newsletter, YouthVIP newsletter and Youth Work Briefing.

We had 4 social media posts promoting the report (2 pre-launch, 1 launch, 1 for #EducationNeedsYouthWork week in December). In total they got 5404 impressions and 203 engagements.

What's Next & Overview

We plan to put learning from this paper into action in the coming year, with YouthLink Scotland leading a working group on youth work's role in supporting young people from more deprived communities to volunteer.

Youth Engagement

YouthVIP panel

The YouthVIP panel are a group of 20 young volunteers from across Scotland. The aims of the group are to encourage and inspire young people, with diverse experiences, communities and backgrounds, to participate in volunteering; support the ongoing promotion and celebration of volunteering to and with young people; and encourage organisations and decision-makers to better understand the motivations for and barriers to volunteering for diverse young people.

The YouthVIP panel aim to support decision-makers to implement practical solutions based on insights and taking the lead from young people themselves; and to encourage the development and promotion of diverse, quality and inclusive volunteering opportunities that are suited to the needs and motivations of all young people.

Recruitment

In April 2025 Young Scot 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 still like to remain involved. From these individual conversations, 17 YouthVIP panel members indicated that they would like to remain part of the project moving forward.

Young Scot delivered a new recruitment process conducted in May 2025, with the opportunity shared through our YSHive Volunteer Programme to over 200 volunteers. From this we received 10 notes of interest. All young people interested were invited to take part in individual calls, sharing details of the previous and upcoming phases of the project and giving them the opportunity to share their motivations and interests in joining the YouthVIP panel.

Following this, we offered three young people a position on the YouthVIP panel enhancing panel membership to 20 young people, aged 12-24. Of the 20 young people on the panel three identified as male, 15 identified as female and two as non-binary. The group are from a wide range of areas across Scotland, including Aberdeenshire, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Fife, Glasgow, Moray, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire and Stirling. The volunteers' current demographics include representation from a diverse range of backgrounds and characteristics, with five identifying as a young black person or person of colour, four declaring a disability and five panel members also currently living within SIMD 1 and 2 quintile areas.

Throughout this phase of the YouthVIP project, four sessions were held with YouthVIP panel members, amassing a combined 165 volunteering hours. The YouthVIP panel sessions focused on various activities throughout the year, contributing to the work of the wider consortium as well as leading on the areas the panel felt were a priority for the group.

The sessions' focus areas included the research survey report launch, working with staff from YouthLink Scotland to plan the event; the creation of the questionnaire for third sector organisations to identify opportunities for collaboration with partners; planning the panel's involvement in the Volunteer Scotland Roundtable event; and reflecting on the work they had been involved in throughout the year.

The panel have had the opportunity to contribute to specific areas of work, as well as keeping a focus on their strategic aims, responding to the needs and barriers young people face when accessing volunteering opportunities, demonstrating the breadth of their impact across the YouthVIP programme.

Session 7th June 2025

- The first YouthVIP panel session was held on Saturday 7th June where the young people met in-person. At the session, following an introduction to this phase of the programme, the panel members worked with YouthLink Scotland staff to develop the plans for the Survey Report Launch. The group spent time designing and developing the layout of the day, the activities involved and who would be leading on specific roles throughout, including the presentation.
- The group also spent dedicated time developing an evaluation feedback form to capture impact of the engagement they had throughout this phase of the programme. This included their participation in external opportunities through the project, as well as capturing their impact on organisations and young people they have engaged with previously and throughout the programme this year.



Session 20th September 2025

- The YouthVIP panel held their second session on Saturday 20th September, in-person, where they worked with Volunteering Matters' Marketing and Communications Content Lead. The young people developed plans and designs for zines and physical materials that can be used as promotion and representing the work of the YouthVIP programme, to be handed out at events and used as quick-hit resource tools and visual aids.
- The zines were completed individually and designed to showcase their volunteering journey. These encapsulated the identities of the panel members; their motivations for volunteering; what they have gained from volunteering, including skills development, experiences and friendships made; challenges and barriers they have faced; and advice they would give to other young people looking to volunteer.
- The YouthVIP panel also developed a short questionnaire to identify areas of work and engagement opportunities with partners throughout this phase of the programme. This was based on the recommendations from the survey report and the key areas identified from their discussion day in the previous phase. This was designed to support the panel to explore what might bring most value to external partners, local authorities and organisations who are looking to offer volunteering opportunities for young people, as well as those who are struggling to engage young people. The group developed a list of organisations they would have liked to engage as part of this process, with a focus on those they hadn't engaged with previously.

Session 17th January 2026

- The third panel session was held on Saturday 17th January, where the YouthVIP panel worked collaboratively to develop the plan and running order of the Volunteer Scotland roundtable event they had been invited to lead to help bridge the participation gap in youth volunteering.
- The YouthVIP panel worked together to design a presentation for the roundtable as well as developing the questions and activities that they would lead on the day. Using the brief which had been provided, the panel identified discussion questions that focused on the barriers organisations face when engaging young people in opportunities, the support organisations require to engage young people and how young people can be involved in decision-making opportunities that directly impact them.
- The YouthVIP panel also worked with Volunteering Matters Marketing and Communications Content Lead to create content and take part in filming, focusing on their experience of being part of the panel and the opportunities as a result of this. The aim of which is to provide a showcase of the volunteering opportunities brought to life by each individual YouthVIP panel member for use out in the volunteering world and of course as a fantastic resource for peer- to- peer showcasing 'A Day In The Life Of' a YouthVIP panel member.



Session 21st March 2026

- The final YouthVIP panel session was held on Saturday 21st March 2026. The session focused on giving the group the opportunity to reflect on their journey throughout the project and what they have achieved, both individually and as a group. The group reflected on their project journey: how they found out about the opportunity to join the YouthVIP panel, the experiences they have gained as part of the YouthVIP panel, the best thing about being a member of the YouthVIP panel, the most challenging part of their YouthVIP panel experience and how it has impacted their thoughts on volunteering.
- The young people also reflected on the activities they have been involved in and delivered during this phase of the project. This included the YouthVIP panel sessions; communications and content they had taken part in; and external events such as Volunteer Scotland Roundtable, Cross Party Group on Volunteering, Saltire Awards Steering Group (marketing opportunities), Social Enterprise Scotland Q&A, Institute of Directors, SCVO and Volunteer Scotland Parliamentary Reception.
- They were able to express their views on what they had enjoyed, the skills they had developed from taking part in these, as well as identifying areas that could be improved.
- The YouthVIP panel conducted some future vision planning, beginning to identify areas they would like to see the project focus on going forward and people and organisations they would like to engage with. They were also asked to reflect on their experiences of working with each partner on the project and shared their views on what they enjoyed, what could be improved and areas they would like to be involved in in the future.

YouthVIP Panel Opportunities

As part of this phase of the programme, the YouthVIP Panel members have had the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of opportunities both with the partner consortium and externally. These opportunities have given the panel members the ability to speak to decision makers about the work of the group; have a voice in decisions that will impact on young people; and speak directly to organisations that offer volunteering opportunities to young people.



These opportunities have enabled the panel to develop key skills in communication, facilitation and public speaking as well as supporting them to increase their knowledge and understanding around the youth volunteering landscape in Scotland. This phase has also seen one panel member move into more strategic role as a Young Scot Trustee and two panel members move into employment with the partner consortium by successfully interviewing for the role of Marketing and Communications Content Lead.

The opportunities have included:

On Thursday 5th June two YouthVIP panel members attended the Cross-Party Group on Volunteering at the Scottish Parliament with staff from Volunteering Matters and YouthLink Scotland to discuss and highlight their volunteering experiences, both positive and negative. The YouthVIP panel members were able to speak about the support they have received and the skills they have developed through volunteering and the difference this has had on them.



- The role of the Marketing and Communications Content Lead position was shared with the panel. This saw five panel members submit an application, and interviews were held with each applicant, led by Volunteering Matters and supported by staff at Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland. Following the interview process Volunteering Matters successfully offered the position to a current panel member, who is now in post
- Shortly before this phase of the programme commenced, one of the panel members applied to become a member of Young Scot's Board. Following the application and interview process the panel member was successfully recruited and is now a current and active Young Scot Board member.
- Four panel members attended, presented and led discussions at Volunteer Scotland roundtable discussion on the 28th January 2026. The panel members each presented and led discussion tables based on questions they had developed that focused on bridging the participation gap in youth volunteering in Scotland and what organisations could do to support this.
- Two panel members attended SCVO & Volunteer Scotland's Parliamentary Reception on 19th February 2026. The event was hosted by Jeremy Balfour MSP, to celebrate the work of Scotland's voluntary sector and promote the essential role of the voluntary sector and volunteers to Scotland, with the sector and elected representatives. The panel members had the opportunity to speak to representatives from the Third Sector, businesses and MSPs.
- Research events & working alongside the YouthVIP panel to share the findings and process of the 2024-2025 research with stakeholders interested in research on the voluntary sector and on volunteering.



Quotes from the YouthVIP Panel Members

The young people as part of the YouthVIP Panel and have shared...

“ It’s been a positive experience, especially getting involved in projects that feel meaningful and youth focused. ”

“ Being part of the panel has made me realise I want to work in politics or advocate for young people in Scotland. ”

“ Attending the Cross-Party Group on Volunteering was very interesting and influenced my career choice. ”

“ Attending events such as the SCVO and Volunteer Scotland Parliamentary Reception has allowed me to speak to people in the Third Sector and decision makers. Things I would never have been able to do before. ”

“ It’s fun coming back together to talk about new ideas and updating each other about our personal lives. I’ve met some interesting people and made lifelong friends. ”

Case Studies

Being part of the Youth VIP panel has been a really fun experience for me. It has helped me build my confidence and improve my public speaking skills, especially when sharing ideas and speaking in front of others.

I have also made new friends through the panel, which has made the experience more positive.

As part of the project, I learned how focus groups can be used to gather qualitative data. One of the highlights for me was presenting the survey results at a conference, which helped me develop my communication skills.

YouthVIP Panel Member

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. 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.

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.

- YouthVIP Panel member

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“Being part of the YouthVIP Panel for the past two years has been a transformative experience. Having volunteered since the age of 10, I joined the panel with a strong belief in the value of volunteering and a desire to encourage more young people to get involved.

The panel has given me several incredible experiences that I otherwise would not have had exposure to. I have helped co-design a national youth volunteering survey, represented YouthVIP to stakeholders and presented at many events to provide recommendations on how organisations can better include young people in volunteering.

One of my most significant achievements has been representing YouthVIP at a Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group, where I had the opportunity to present on a roundtable on youth perspectives in volunteering. This experience completely changed my career aspirations, and I realised that I was both interested in politics and it was something I could pursue. Since this event, I have worked for an MSP for a number of months.

Throughout my time on the panel, my leadership, confidence and public speaking skills have developed significantly. I initially was unsure whether my contributions would make a difference, and I now confidently present to rooms of key stakeholders, influence discussions and represent the views of young people.

Being part of YouthVIP has highlighted the power of meaningful youth participation; it has reinforced my belief that when young people are genuinely included, they can drive real change.”

YouthVIP Panel Member

”

“I joined the Scotland’s Young People’s Forest Panel, and then later the YouthVIP panel, getting involved in various training and engagement opportunities along the way. Young Scot introduced to me my ability to be an active participant in the future of young people in Scotland, taking my social action work national. Both groups allowed me to explore different aspects and themes within volunteering; SYPF about championing a better, more climate-conscious future and creating designated green spaces for young people, YouthVIP about using my voice and lived experience to make volunteering accessible and enjoyable for young people across Scotland. Whilst my volunteering journey continued after this point, seeing me become an #iwill ambassador for Scotland, a member of the Scottish Women in Sport Digital Committee, join even more Young Scot panels and much more, it was my next step in my journey with the YouthVIP panel which had the biggest impact of all. I am now employed by Volunteering Matters (part of the YouthVIP Consortium) as the Youth Marketing and Communications Content Lead for the panel, working closely with members of staff to plan and film content at panel sessions, update and maintain the YouthVIP website, and work on various external resources – all with the aim of making people aware of the amazing work of the panel and its young people. For me, this role is a dream, and I still can’t quite believe it’s real! Having an opportunity like this is such a blessing, and one which I would not have had if it weren’t for my volunteering experiences.

My volunteering journey has been nothing short of transformative, and my decision to get involved in volunteering was the best choice I have ever made for myself. One of the aspects in which I have noticed the most incredible impact is my confidence. I went from being perpetually shy, introverted, and lacking in self-confidence to being able to confidently deliver presentations, lead workshops, and overall, I feel that I carry myself a lot more confidently in my daily life. This is something which has been noted by teachers, peers, and my own family, who all note that they have seen a positive change in me. I can safely say I would not be where I am without the lessons, experiences, and opportunities I have had through volunteering.”

YouthVIP Panel Member

*to find out a lot more about these in-depth case studies and other YouthVIP participants involvements, hop on to the YouthVIP Website.

Schools Activity

The importance of schools and schools' partnerships in building inclusive volunteering

As was evident in our research findings, schools are a key space for young people to find out about volunteering and be supported to volunteer, especially when they would struggle to access volunteering opportunities out with school time.

This year we have been working on our Youth Volunteering Schools Resource toolkit to make the format more accessible and easier to disseminate and by the time you are reading this it will be almost ready to (re)launch – Beginning of June 26 and in perfect time for reinforcing the message as a key driver as part of 'Volunteers Week' and the new school year 26-27.

To accompany this, we have created a set of case studies to support and contextualise the messaging of the Youth Volunteering in Schools resource. These case studies highlight great partnership working done by schools with youth work, TSIs and third sector organisations, and serve as powerful examples that others can learn from.

Partnership working is a hugely important element of the Youth Volunteering in Schools resource and central to the volunteering support through schools that is already taking place across the country. We hope that by showcasing these examples, alongside the Youth Volunteering in Schools resource, we can give practitioners both the knowledge and practicalities of partnership working and why it is so important to create a culture of volunteering in schools.

The case studies feature a range of examples of partnership working from these fantastic organisations:

- Growing2gether
- Lenzie Academy Community Engagement
- Fife Voluntary Action
- Mark Scott Leadership

We will move into 2026-27 with this refreshed package of resources available to engage effectively with even more schools and educational networks.

YouthVIP & Schools - ‘Community of Practice’

A pilot project working closely with three ‘selected’ schools. Two schools within Fife who were successful in their application to become part of the pilot in conjunction with the local TSI (Fife Voluntary Action), and one school within Perth chosen as an outlier but surrounded by great local authority support and opportunity.

Building on wider school work to engage colleagues in volunteering, our Schools Community of Practice pilot purposely set out to work directly and intensely with a small number of schools, to engage teachers and wider school staff, to enable them to build and develop a culture of volunteering bespoke to their school.

The Community of Practice is about exploring shared challenges and ambitions for volunteering in the school environment, co-create ideas for increasing accessibility and impact, and identify collaborative opportunities for sustained improvement.

By working directly with three different schools, we set out to support staff to achieve the change they wanted to see - based on the schools’ specific challenges and opportunities to embrace volunteering throughout their school environment.

The Community of Practice model – peer - led, collaborative learning - “Building a Culture of Meaningful Volunteering in Our School”.

Below presents the process, workflow and session headings for each of the Community of Practice workshops. Although each session is facilitated, it is very much about the group participating identifying and leading the conversation and prioritisation throughout each session. In facilitating sessions with this open nature, we enable the school to drive the priority topic areas, without the YouthVIP team having pre-conceived ideas about what a ‘positive’ outcome should look like. It also enables us to cater to schools at various stages of their volunteering journey, with progress being able to be made relative to the schools’ starting point.

SESSION 1

1. Welcome & Framing
2. Mapping the Current Landscape

SESSION 2

3. Challenges & Exploration
4. Co-creating solutions

SESSION 3

5. Prioritising & Planning Next Steps
6. Reflection & Close

Feedback, discussion & follow-up

These workshops are focussed on a diverse group of attendees having the opportunity to contribute ideas, share thoughts to build and develop a realistic action plan that will in-turn allow everyone involved to embed volunteering throughout the school. Not just for the school, staff and pupils but to also have the involvement of the community.

Of the three partner schools we engaged with, they were all at completely different stages with their volunteering journeys.

School One

After much engagement with the school's leadership team, including positive conversations with the school's Deputy Head Teacher, this school was unfortunately unable to commit to the potential 'pilot' opportunity due to challenges around availability and competing priorities within the school. After many conversations and then subsequent attempts of engagement, as a team we made the decision that the timing wasn't right and after further discussion left the door open for opportunity once the new term 26-27 starts.

School Two

This school were very much aligned with the ambition of the Community of Practice pilot, and had strong early engagement with initial discussions, planning and preparation. This was coordinated by a Teacher who was leading this initiative by themselves, hoping to grow the opportunity further across the staff team into the school choices and be further supported by senior staff to increase pupil engagement.

In addition to seeking staff involvement, there was also a group of young people that participated in the sessions, based around volunteering opportunities that they were already involved in through the school prior to the pilot. These young people were enthusiastic and committed to the benefits and experience that volunteering has already given them and keen to share ideas and thoughts.

However, we once again experienced challenges around timing and commitment of the group as we were unable to make further traction after the 1st session was delivered. Given the premise of the Community of Practice being for the school, by the school, we did not feel we had enough meaningful engagement to schedule future sessions to make this partnership a success. Therefore, we decided to discontinue working with this school for the remainder of the programme year.

School Three

This school has a very successful volunteering programme fully up and running already, almost as part of the pupil choice curriculum. This programme of choice is led by the school volunteering coordinator and has several other support staff members to enhance the awareness and capability further.

The school itself is extremely proactive in creating opportunity, involving peer to peer support, classroom drop-in's and reaching out to the local community for both help and support. The school coordinator regularly runs 'volunteering events', 'open days' and has guest speakers come in from VIO's to talk about placement opportunities and offer help and advice, making volunteering visible, involved and rewarding.

YouthVIP have been able to participate in one of the school open days, raising the awareness of opportunities available and why it is so important to be able to have the choice to volunteer. We were also very fortunate to be able to have the opportunity to speak too two of the year groups who are to be involved in their next stages of the 'Community of Practice'. Timescales have been very much flexible to accommodate availability of staff and or others involved.

What we have discovered when approaching secondary schools with the opportunity to be part of the Community of Practice pilot is:

- Communication is key.
- A clear introduction and walkthrough of expectations for the pilot project.
- An agreed involvement / commitment of staff / an agreed involvement / commitment of volunteer representatives
- A commitment of time and space
- An expectation of involvement to develop ideas and then putting these into action
- Continued & ongoing involvement / support
- To champion and celebrate successes and allow for growth
- A full understanding of the expectation that the pilot project can help / further help with embedding volunteering within your school.

What we very quickly found out is that resources of availability (time and space) aren't always as easy to manage when there are other things going on in and around the school.

Some were able to commit to a schedule, whilst others were struggling due to things that arose during the allotted time that needed to be dealt with immediately. Clearly proving that a one-size does not fit all. This has allowed us to reflect on a multi-sided approach and adapt the second phase of this pilot both with the currently involved Schools and also the new schools and taking all of the above in to consideration when discussing and finalising into the next steps.

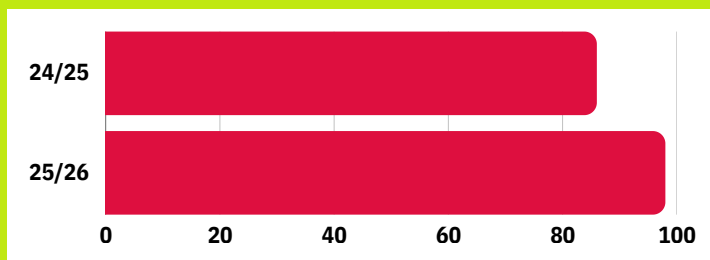
Learning Practice / Training & Impact Sessions

This year our **‘Engaging Young Volunteers: Turning Interest into Impact!’** was reviewed before launch to highlight the activity and findings from the most recent YouthVIP led reports and follow-up study. This allowed us to bring in key findings relevant to what young people are asking for when beginning their volunteering journey and the importance of support that needs to be provided by the organisations to make this work for all.

Focusing in detail on the report, some of the findings themselves and of course the nine specific recommendations that came out of this report we threaded some of these findings through this amazing 90-minute ‘Impact Session’ without losing the momentum of building a successful, inclusive approach to volunteering for young people.

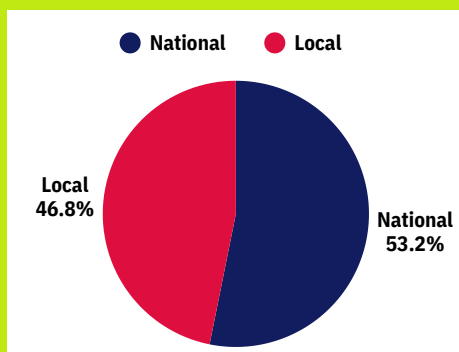
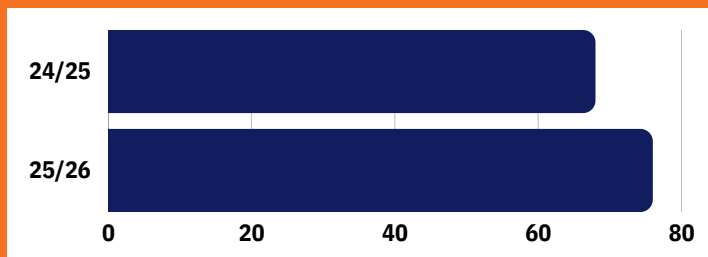
We continue to see healthy demand - a strong and continuous want and need for these ‘Impact Sessions’. This has become more and more evident in feedback from presentations, talks, conversations, and meetings we have attended throughout the year and of course from the sessions themselves.

As we are beginning to see volunteering participation increasing across the third sector and beyond (Scottish Household Study – revision & updates), it’s only right that we can offer out this amazing ‘Impact Session’ to everyone and the engagement and attendance numbers reflect this, with a strong pick up against over the last programme year.



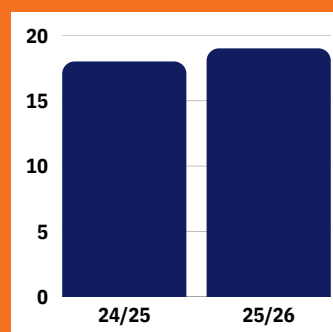
Across 4 online impact sessions this year, we had 98 attendees - a 12% increase from 24/25.

We had 76% of sign ups convert to attendance, an 8% increase from 24/25.



We had 37 local, and 42 national organisations in attendance, including multiple people from the same organisation!

We had 19 TSI engagements, a 3% increase since 24/25.



(all other) local, national, and business engagements - some with more than one volunteer/employee in attendance!

Quotes from some of the session attendees

We on this zoom session need heard by our teams too!

Useful time spent in breakout rooms chatting with other organisations across the country.

(response to: how do you think you will use these learnings):
“Bring them (other staff) to our next volunteering subgroup meeting and feeding back on the content delivered in this session.”

Promote this session more widely for more organisations.

Share the information from the training and build capacity for other organisations to do youth volunteering well

Helpful session, thanks for running it for us.

Provide more platforms to hear voice and follow through – act on feedback

(Some) Feedback

Helpful, motivational & challenging – I need to up my game!

Inspiring, encouraging, connecting

Energetic, educational and a great networking opportunity

Reassuring, informative & positive

Uplifting, informal and educational

Insightful, relevant, practical

Informative, inspiring & supportive

Engaging and thought provoking

Marketing and Communications

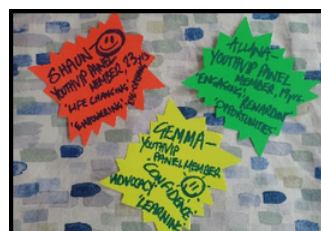
Our subscription and mailshot list has increased this past year, and we now send out our quarterly newsletter to over 200 eager people within the volunteering community. The newsletter keeps everyone up to date with everything that is going on the YouthVIP world and once received it is then shared within the mailshot networks community.

With the amazing input and feedback from the Marketing and Communications lead, combined with the YouthVIP panel, we have produced:

- **Zines** – A visual ‘hand-out’ representation of what volunteering means to each YouthVIP panel member, a small pocket sized extremely impactful overview, great for peer-to-peer representation.



- **Zap Cards** – When the YouthVIP panel themselves aren’t available or cannot be present at talks, presentations, forums, they are always introduced by the power of their ‘volunteering statement’ captured on our Zap Cards – what volunteering means to them, in three words. These are always well received and always a fantastic photo opportunity to show that no matter what, the YouthVIP panel are at the heart of what we do!



Hard work is also underway to deliver more YouthVIP activity, coming soon:

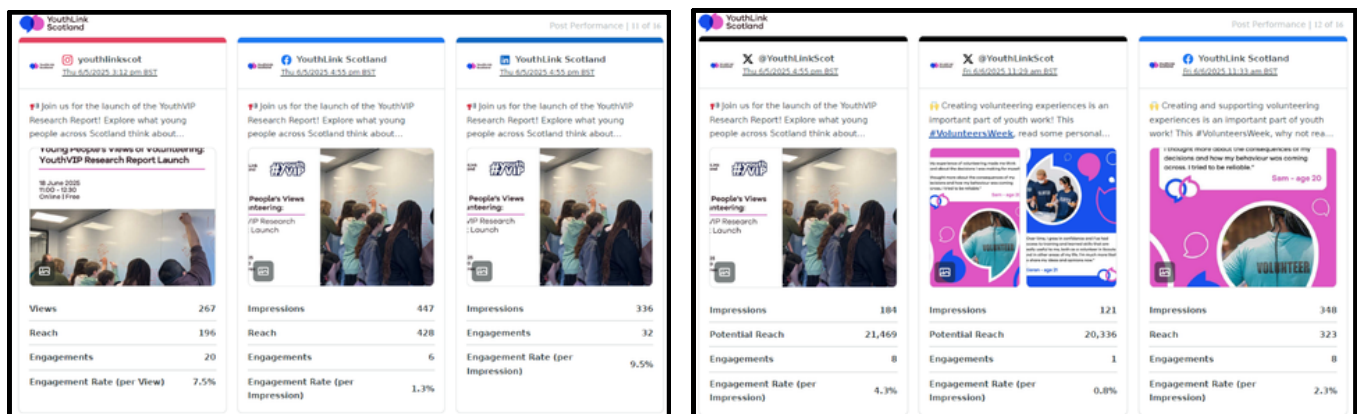
- ‘A day in the life of...’ – A fully documented story-board from the YouthVIP panel members themselves coming along to a YouthVIP panel session day! Some video content, some pictures and some wording. A resource tool which can be watched, shown and presented in a manner that allows people to see exactly what it’s like to be involved with YouthVIP and the volunteering opportunities it presents.
- ‘YouthVIP in action’ – A stand-alone page on the YouthVIP Website. A dedicated, refreshing and accessible look at all the activity and involvement going on in the YouthVIP panel members’ world. A showcase of interest for people wanting to get involved, find out more and ask questions they never even knew they had!
- Videos, screenshots, voiceovers, pictures and as much involvement as we possibly (ongoing) can to continue to bring to life the amazing work done to support bringing volunteering for young people to the forefront of everybody’s thoughts.
- And... last but by no means least...An updated and fully refreshed website (coming soon!) to help everyone find what they are looking for – Toolkits, links, pictures, activity and a whole lot more.

YouthLink Scotland Volunteers Week Campaign

Campaign Summary:

- Impressions 17,443
- Engagements 1009
- Engagement Rate (Facebook) 7.5%
- Engagement Rate (LinkedIn) 7.2%
- Engagement Rate (X) 2.8%
- Engagement Rate (Instagram) 3.3%

The campaign did very well compared with industry average: an engagement rate of less than 1% is low, 1-3% is solid, and 3-5% is strong, so the engagement rates were all strong, particularly on Facebook and LinkedIn with over 7% each.

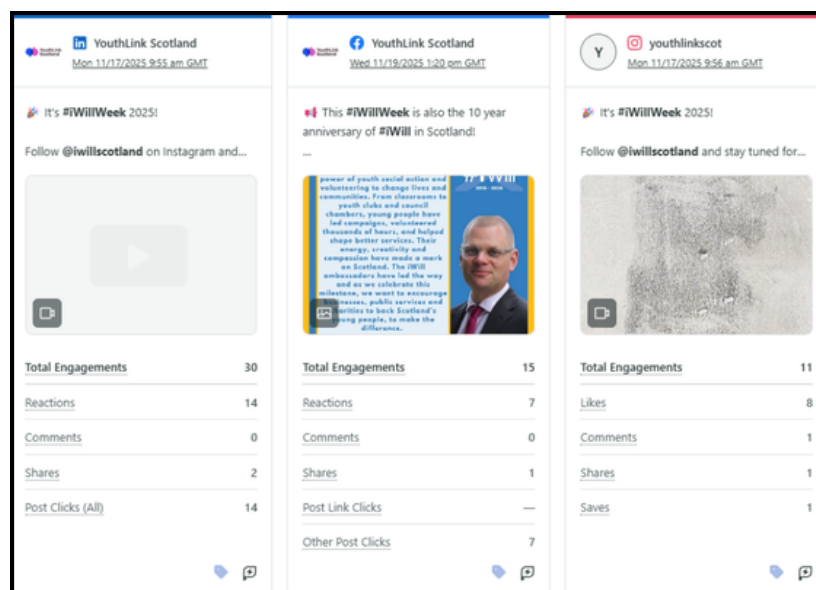


YouthLink Scotland #IWill Week Campaign

Campaign Summary from YouthLink Scotland accounts:

- 1,906 impressions
- 77 engagements
- 4% engagement rate
- 20 post link clicks

Below were the best performing posts on each of the social media platforms utilised



Campaign summary from #IWill Scotland accounts:

- 3030 views
- 137 interactions

Volunteer Scotland Volunteers Week

We supported Volunteer Scotland's Volunteers Week campaign, spotlighting the story of Gemma, the fantastic YouthVIP Panel member and #IWill Ambassador.

<https://volunteersweek.org/news-stories/gemmas-story-youthvip-panel-member>

Conclusions and Next Steps

Over 2025/26, YouthVIP has continued to demonstrate the value of combining youth-led insight with practical support to the volunteering ecosystem. By embedding our research recommendations across delivery, convening partners to agree shared actions, and widening the reach of our learning and development offer, we have strengthened the infrastructure around youth volunteering. We have also continued to amplify young people's lived experience in national forums and decision-making spaces, while investing in the YouthVIP panel as a mechanism for meaningful participation and leadership development.

Looking ahead to 2026/27, we will focus on turning shared learning into coordinated action across Scotland's youth volunteering infrastructure. Building on the foundations set out in this report, we will deepen collaborative working between TSIs, schools, volunteer involving organisations and national partners to strengthen local pathways into volunteering, remove practical barriers, and ensure young people's lived experience continues to shape design, delivery and decision making. We will do this by:

- Strengthening collaboration and shared practice across TSIs, schools and volunteer involving organisations, so that local areas can align effort and provide clearer, more consistent routes into volunteering for young people.
- Support partners to embed inclusive, youth-centred approaches that respond to what young people tell us they need, particularly in relation to accessibility, flexibility, communications and support to take the first step.
- Continue to amplify youth voice and translate insight into practical tools, resources and learning offers that help the wider system improve quality and participation over time.

We thank our funders, The Scottish Government, for their support and partnership to ensure this important work can continue and have a broader impact on youth volunteering nationally.