Governance

Although originally devised specifically for the years 2004 to 2009, the all-age Volunteering Strategy [1] remains current. In it, the then Scottish Executive described its role as follows:

Although volunteering is essentially an individual activity, government has an important role to play in creating the conditions within which volunteering can flourish.

The strategy went on to specify that apart from being a major funder of volunteering, the Scottish Executive (now Government) has an impact on the volunteering market through its roles as a policy-maker (including cross-cutting policies and priorities), legislator (as the source of most of the bills considered by the Scottish Parliament) and as a provider of intelligence about Scottish society (through sources such as the Scottish Household Survey [2]).

The Scottish Government sets out broad national policy for youth and volunteering through its Cabinet Secretaries. Responsibility for youth volunteering and other forms of volunteering is split across the Scottish Government.

The two main Cabinet Secretaries with relevant policy responsibilities are the:

- Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities [3]
- Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills [4].

At executive level, the Local Government and Communities Directorate [5] leads policy on the Third Sector.

A range of voluntary organisations are involved in the promotion and organisation of voluntary
activity and may be included as stakeholders in policy-making. These include Volunteer Development Scotland [6] (also known as Volunteer Scotland) which is funded by the Scottish Government to develop, promote and enhance volunteering across Scotland. It applies its funding to:

- research, demonstrate and measure the impact made by volunteers
- support paid staff and volunteers to develop skills through accessing training and easy to use volunteer development tools, policies and good practice
- offer a one-stop digital gateway to everyone in Scotland who might want to find volunteer opportunities
- support organisations to post and advertise new volunteer opportunities and events through web-based tools
- provide an expert disclosure service for voluntary organisations
- help organisations and people who can influence volunteering such as funders, Government, and policy makers
- work with partners to support projects, innovation and creativity in volunteering.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

Third Sector Interfaces [7] (TSIs) are funded by the Scottish Government to support and develop local third sector activity in all its forms and, more specifically, to support youth volunteering and administer the Saltire Awards (see sub-heading ‘Existing arrangements’ [8] in the article entitled ‘Skills Recognition’ for information on the Awards). The 32 TSIs each operate within a specific local authority [9] and take different organisational forms: 20 of them are single agencies and 12 of them are formed of partnerships across bodies historically associated with supporting their local voluntary sector, social enterprises and volunteers. Some of these are termed ‘Volunteer Centres’, ‘Centres for Voluntary Service’ or ‘Social Enterprise Networks’.

Voluntary Action Scotland [10] is a membership body representing the 32 TSIs. Its role is to develop and support the TSI network through:

- promoting the positive impact that TSIs have at local level
- encouraging good practice
- raising the profile of the TSIs at national level
- facilitating peer support to colleagues in the network.
The Cross-Party Group (CPG) on Volunteering brings together Members of the Scottish Parliament, voluntary organisations and TSIs to engage with policy-makers on matters of interest to the sector. Its role is to:

- raise awareness of volunteering in all sectors to ultimately increase participation rates
- ensure volunteering has a high profile in the Scottish Parliament and influences Scottish Government policy
- ensure opportunities for volunteering are recognised across all Scottish Government directorates
- examine and share research from other parts of the UK and beyond
- liaise and work with other CPGs to promote volunteering.