



# Stirling's Volunteering Action Plan 2023/2026

April 2023

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# Introduction

## Volunteering for All

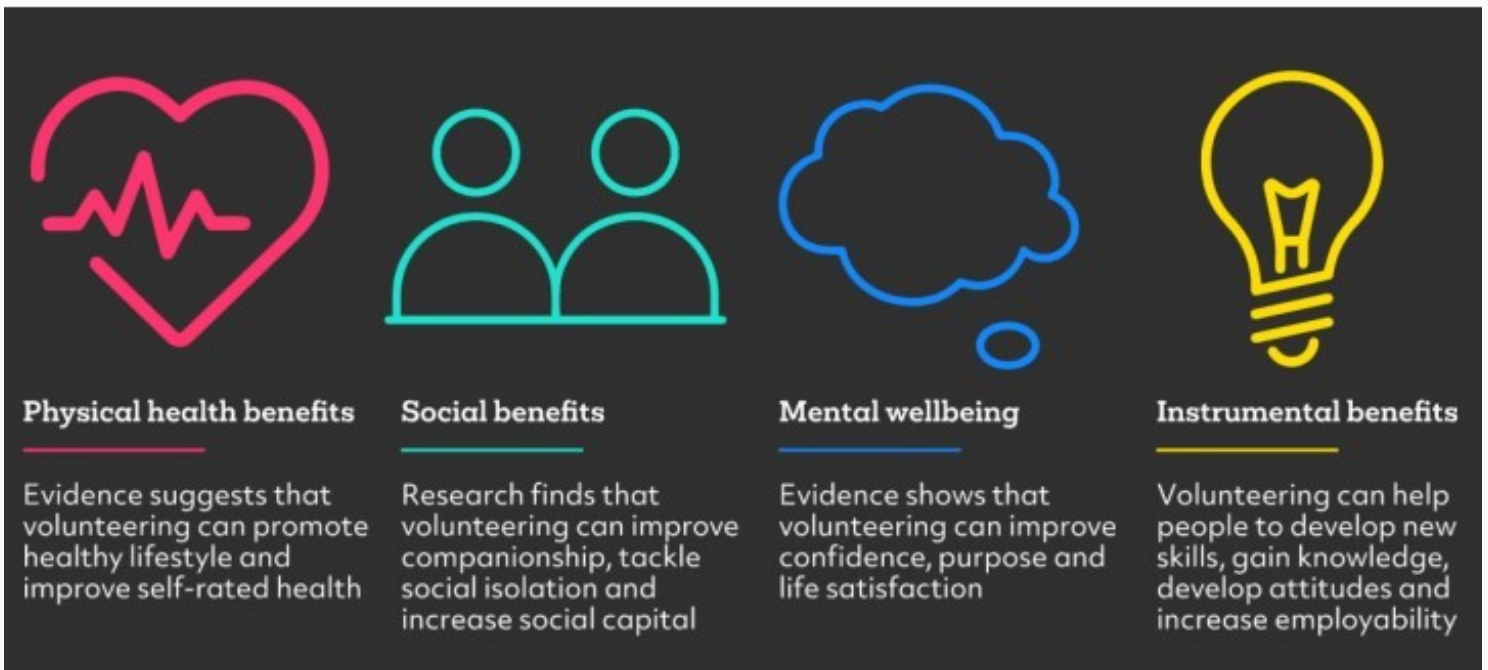
[Scotland's Volunteering Action Plan](#) (VAP) was launched in 2022 setting out an ambitious 10 year plan, with 47 ideas for action.

In response to that and as part of 'Stirling's Alive with Volunteering' project, a group of local partners representing volunteering came together to develop Stirling's Volunteering Action Plan for the next 3 years. This plan sets out the actions that will be taken forward initially

including those from the national plan, to realise their shared aspiration – to increase volunteering participation for all.

## Benefits of Volunteering

The benefits to society of volunteering are well documented and set out in the [Volunteering for All National Framework](#). The value of volunteering to the Scottish economy is estimated to be £2.2bn alongside the non-financial benefits:



Stirling has a strong record of volunteering and this was particularly evident during COVID when over 800 informal volunteers came forward to help their communities. However, we know that participation is not universal across our communities and requires investment to address this as well as to sustain engagement.

## The Stirling Plan

The [Stirling Plan](#) 2017-2027 forms part of the strategic context for Stirling and includes 4 priority outcomes for partnership working

to ensure the communities of Stirling are; Prosperous, Healthy, Achieving and Resilient.

This action plan has been developed in line with these outcomes and the more recent strategic priorities of Stirling Council for 2022-2027.

This plan is intended to provide a route map for all those involved in volunteering for collective action to support the realisation of the national outcomes through a local action plan.

# Approach

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Stirling's Volunteering Action Plan has been developed using the outcomes from the national Volunteering for All Framework as a basis:

**1**

Volunteering and participation is valued, supported and enabled from the earliest possible age and throughout life.

**2**

Volunteering in all its forms is integrated and recognised in our lives through national and local policy.

**3**

There is an environment and culture which celebrates volunteers and volunteering and all of its benefits.

**4**

The places and spaces where we volunteer are developed, supported and sustained.

**5**

There are diverse, quality and inclusive opportunities for everyone to get involved and stay involved.

During 2022, Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise (SVE) and its partners met regularly to discuss each outcome, what it meant in practical terms, how Stirling was performing currently and what the main gaps and opportunities were.

From there, a set of ideas for action to support the outcomes were identified (including some from the national VAP), ranging from 'quick wins' which organisations can do straight away, to medium and longer term actions that require further development by the steering group including identifying funding to support.

## Success Measures

The same measures of success from the national VAP will be used to monitor progress and evaluate the success of this plan:

- Increase volunteering participation by focusing on non-volunteers and lapsed volunteers, and especially those who will gain most benefit.
- Widen access to volunteering by understanding and reducing the barriers to participation and supporting community-based, 'place-making' activities.
- Listen to volunteers by ensuring that the volunteer 'voice' is heard and that volunteers help make the decisions that affect them.
- Provide great experiences whereby volunteers feel supported, valued, and recognised for their contribution.



## Partners

SVE would like to thank the following partners who have participated so far in the development of this plan and their ongoing commitment to supporting the implementation of it:

- Stirling Council
- Police Scotland
- Plus Forth Valley
- Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park
- The Thistles Centre
- University of Stirling Student Union
- Active Stirling
- NHS Forth Valley

# Volunteering Landscape in Stirling

The most recent breakdown of volunteering data for Stirling is from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) 2018 and showed that the formal volunteering rate was 44%, compared to 26% for Scotland. It also showed:

Female volunteering rates were higher than males, 44% compared to 40%

Those earning over £30,000 had a higher volunteering rate compared to those earning under £15k, 46% compared to 40%

The volunteering rate in the least disadvantaged areas of Stirling was 56%

The highest rates of volunteering in Stirling took place in local community or neighbourhood organisations (32%), health disability and wellbeing (32%) or children's education and schools (28%)

Statistics on youth volunteering are not included in the Scottish Household Survey however we know from the various formal youth accreditation schemes in Stirling that during the period April 2021 to March 2022 there were:

196 new Saltire Registrations and 298 certificates awarded, equating to 4,665 volunteering hours

Duke of Edinburgh Awards - 2,899 hours of volunteering with a value of £13,393

26 Youth Scotland Dynamic Awards since January 22

56 Hi5 Awards

# Outcome 1

Life Long Engagement: Ensure participation in volunteering is valued and enabled from the earliest possible age and throughout life.

## Life Stages of a Volunteer

We started by looking at what lifelong engagement means and considering the typical life stages of a potential volunteer and the key transitions. Typically, 5 life stages were identified where an individual is likely to encounter volunteering either as a participant or as a recipient:

- School years
- Further education or employment
- Having a family
- Career/ return to work
- Retirement

We also know that during these life stages, individuals / potential volunteers face a number of barriers along the way that either prevent or discourage them from participating or continuing to participate including practical, financial, emotional or social factors. (Refer to Appendix A).

## What currently works well in Stirling

### Partner Led Programmes

Stirling has a number of partner led initiatives that encourage volunteering participation from an early age and beyond. Stirling Council's Senior Phase and Youth Participation (SPYP) run programmes such as Twilight Basketball and Youth clubs where informal recruitment is achieved through focusing on developing relationships with individuals. Active Stirling run activity programmes in schools, which start from primary school age onwards and encourage wider community volunteer participation as well as among young people as youth leaders. Libraries and Learning and Employability, who both have Investing in Volunteering Accreditation, support various initiatives to engage adults in volunteering within their community whilst gaining key skills.



## Formal Volunteer Led Groups

Examples that are more volunteer led include community groups such as Cowie Rural Action Group (CRAG), and Gargunnoch Community Trust (GCT) both organisations run several community focused activities & events throughout the year including Crag Over 60's Thursday Social & Lunch Group, annual litter picks, 10KM run, Pink Dog Poo Campaign as well as targeted campaigns to deliver a skate park/bmx, outside gym and new play equipment. GCT run Bite and Blether sessions, produce the community newsletter, the Bugle, they operate the local Windfarm Fund, and are currently working on range of actions on progressing to make the Gargunnoch Community Centre, Zero Carbon.

## Mutual Aid Groups

We also saw an incredible community response during COVID where mutual aid groups' self-organised in response to the pandemic to support each other. Ladies of the Rock and Kippen Covid Response Group are examples where a group of local volunteers working together within the community during the pandemic, organised and assisted with provision of food, the distribution of prescriptions and toiletries and other activities in response to the need of their communities.

The partners identified a number of potential opportunities that exist currently within Stirling and some of the challenges.

## What are the opportunities?

### Developing Volunteer Pathways

Whilst community activity and volunteering engagement is strong in certain communities, this is not the case across all of Stirling. Developing volunteer pathways and promoting active travel and ways to get involved in areas of historically low engagement.

### Employer Supported Volunteering

It was also recognised that there are a number of local employers offering up to 2 volunteering days per year to their employees however, these are not routinely taken up either due to lack of awareness among employees of their entitlement or difficulty sourcing opportunities – this represents a huge untapped resource.

### Mapping the Volunteer Journey

Engaging with volunteers to establish their goals and what they wish to gain from their experience is crucial to retaining volunteers as well as support during key transitions so that individuals continue on their volunteering journey, particularly at a younger age.

### Resources to Support Inclusive Volunteering

Post pandemic, feedback from Volunteering Involving Organisations (VIOs) across Stirling suggest some are still struggling with volunteer numbers and / or a lack of resource to support individuals who have additional needs to engage in volunteering. Investment in volunteer managers and training could help widen access.

### Shared Volunteer System

Having an established route for pooling volunteers or redirecting them to other opportunities across VIOs within Stirling would help address volunteer shortages.



# Ideas for Action

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## Short Term - how your organisation can contribute

- Tell your story platform - Capture your volunteers stories and share these to help tackle stereotypes around who volunteers and what is involved
- Volunteering and Wellbeing - Promote the benefits of volunteering and link to good mental health & wellbeing e.g. [5 steps to Mental Wellbeing](#)

## Medium Term

- Improve resilience processes and guidance - Recognise community contribution and share best practice around our community organisations
- Tackle transitions for volunteers - targeted work with schools and employers to sustain engagement
- Understand older 'potential' volunteers - Use research to share motivations and needs
- Maximise Employer Supported Volunteering potential a) establish current activity and b) raise awareness around access to Opportunities (Portal)

## Longer Term

- Pooling Volunteer Resources - across organisations
- National Approach to Employer Supported Volunteering
- Fair Volunteering - Ensuring fair volunteering principles, dedicated fund to support expenses within organisations
- Capture 'knowledge' from long term volunteers within organisations e.g. trustees and promote mentoring for new volunteers

# Outcome 2

Volunteering in all its forms is integrated and recognised in our lives through national and local policy

As noted in the national VAP, despite the significant impact of volunteering, it remains under presented in many areas of public policy.

In terms of reviewing this outcome in the context of the Stirling's action plan, partners reflected on their own organisations and policy context and how they in turn could influence wider local and national policies.

## What currently works well in Stirling

### Partnership working

The response to the pandemic in Stirling demonstrated the capability and willingness of local partners to unite together to support Stirling's communities in a crisis. This also underlined the value of volunteers and the incredible contribution they make which was recognised by policy makers at both a local and national level.

## What are the opportunities?

### Taking Stock

This plan provides a catalyst for organisations to take stock and assess what current volunteering policies and procedures they have in place to see if they are fit for purpose, and how in turn they can influence wider local and national policy.

### Representing the Volunteer Voice

Many organisations who work routinely with volunteers do not necessarily engage with them when developing their own strategic plans and policies. Through proper engagement and a greater focus on representing the volunteer voice, organisations can ensure future policies capture this.

# Ideas for Action

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Short Term - how your organisation can contribute

- Establish status of current policies e.g. do you have a volunteering policy? Is it fit for purpose?
- Share this Volunteering Action Plan with your volunteers - how would they like to be involved?

Medium Term

- Build Voice Capacity - Ask volunteers about their experiences, motivations and needs for volunteering

Longer Term

- Volunteer Engagement - to ensure volunteering is appropriately recognised and embedded in organisational policies

# Outcome 3

There is an environment and culture which celebrates volunteers and volunteering and all of its benefits

## What currently works well in Stirling

There are some great initiatives across Stirling that recognise and celebrate volunteering and all of its benefits.

### Formal Recognition & Celebration

Inspire Volunteering Awards is a two yearly celebration event hosted by SVE in partnership with Stirling Council and key partners with awards for volunteers from across Stirling for 7 categories.

The overall winners for 2022 were Girls@S4F.

*Being part of the Inspire Volunteering Awards Ceremony was fantastic and for our Girls@S4F to have been selected by SVE and all the judges as the Inspire Volunteering Overall Winner 2022 was absolutely amazing. I was delighted that their efforts and dedication to Support for Families (S4F) was recognised. Their experience of being part of the overall celebration was exciting but winning was a whole new dimension and will be a lasting memory for each of them. Over the past 4 years the girls have put so much into Support for Families, and I feel they truly deserved this win, they have won the hearts of all the staff and the children they supported.*



Another formal volunteer celebration, which takes place regularly, are passing out parades hosted by Police Scotland. These are for all Police Scotland Young volunteers (PSYV) with families invited to recognise and celebrate their contribution. In addition, young volunteers receive an SVQ for completing a set programme.

The Queens Award for Voluntary Service is national volunteer recognition scheme where the work of volunteer groups that benefits their local communities can be recognised. Start-Up Stirling received the award in recognition of their outstanding contribution to volunteering in 2022.

## What are the opportunities?

### Recording Contribution

Whilst many partners and organisations have their own systems for recording contribution of volunteers (hours) this was found to vary widely.

Stirling's volunteer portal enables volunteers to log their hours and receive digital accreditation badges in return. This free portal function provides a simple way for VIOs to recognise the contribution of their volunteers whilst helping to build up a greater picture of volunteering participation in Stirling.



### Reporting of Benefits

Discussing what a volunteer would like to achieve from giving their time and tracking and recording these this will help to capture the full impact of volunteering participation within an organisation. This includes the social and emotional factors alongside the financial value of the volunteering hours.

# Ideas for Action

## Short Term - how your organisation can contribute

- Encourage volunteers to log their hours on the portal to gain achievement badges
- Ask for feedback - Capture & highlight the benefits to individuals who participate in volunteering
- Shout Out Boards (Virtual or physical) to recognise volunteer contribution and share on social media regularly

## Medium Term

- Standardized Benefits Tracker - Develop tool for centrally recording benefits – to identify volunteer goals, track their journey and what they gained in terms of skills and experience.
- Support for Volunteering Leaders - Encouraging our volunteers to be ambassadors through training and tapping into their aspirations

## Longer Term

- Knowledge hub to recognise and celebrate volunteering - Develop and agree standardised approaches to recognition and celebration of volunteering within organisations across Stirling and seek partner sign up e.g. Volunteer Charter
- Improve and Widen the update of standards of practice - investment in dedicated volunteer coordinators who can manage the volunteer journey and work towards recognised quality standards e.g. Volunteer Friendly

# Outcome 4

The places and spaces where we volunteer are developed, supported and sustained

Stirling has a rich and diverse landscape in which to volunteer from the city centre right across our urban and rural communities. From parent councils, local arts, sports clubs and societies to our national and country parks and famous visitor attractions.

For places and spaces to be a good place to volunteer, a combination of elements are needed. As well as the basic facilities such as car parking, access to toilets and refreshments, the right culture in an organisation is a key factor, where volunteers are treated as equals and their contribution valued. Practical training and peer support or volunteering with a friend can also make a significant difference to the volunteer experience. Routinely asking for volunteer feedback and acting on it is also an important factor to ensure the volunteer voice is heard within an organisation.

## What currently works well in Stirling

### Community led Initiatives

Stirling Council's Community Development teams work across eight priority areas to support community-led development projects that improve community places and spaces, helping communities to get involved and work together to shape change.

### Clubs and Sports Led Volunteering

Sports club grounds across Stirling are prime examples of places and spaces where volunteering is developed, supported and sustained. From football, rugby, cricket to figure skating and ice hockey there are hundreds of places and spaces across Stirling participating in volunteering via sport.

### Volunteering for Culture and the Arts

Stirling benefits from a rich history, which means that the local area boasts a number of famous visitor attractions, which also provide ideal places and spaces for volunteering to flourish. Examples include Bannockburn House that offers a wide range of volunteering opportunities from restoration and gardens to events and history. Their volunteer programme ensures volunteers from all walks of life are supported and enabled including those with mental health issues.

The Argyll Sutherland and Highlanders Museum is an another example with some volunteers having been part of the museum for over 15 years. Retired volunteers sharing their vast knowledge from their own experience with locals and tourists with daily tours on offer around Stirling Castle and the museum.

There are many opportunities to engage in the arts as well with supported volunteering opportunities via social enterprises such as Rubber Chicken Theatre and MacRobert Art Centre.

# What are the opportunities?

## Addressing Barriers

We know that Stirling's communities vary widely in terms of access and opportunities to volunteer. We also know that some of our communities have the highest levels of deprivation in Scotland and that people living in areas of high deprivation are the less likely to participate in volunteering despite being the ones most likely to gain from it.

## Promoting Active Travel

Encouraging volunteering from within a local area and sign posting to ways of accessing volunteering can help to increase participation and address barriers to access e.g. Cycle to Volunteer

## Succession Planning

Initiating, maintaining and sustaining volunteering in a space or place requires some form of succession planning to ensure that it does not stop when a volunteer leaves or 'retires'. Buddy systems can help share load of a 'super volunteer' and increase resilience of the organisation.

- Share best practice in terms of defining a space
- Mentoring support aligned to key roles





# Ideas for Action

## Short Term - how your organisation can contribute

- Encourage 'frictionless' sign ups e.g. use QR codes / posters to direct volunteers to your opportunity on the portal
- Be curious - ask for feedback from your volunteers on what would keep them volunteering, tools / support?
- Keep in touch – regular contact to sustain engagement beyond initial role
- Work out what 'ideal' looks like in terms of volunteer numbers to sustain space / place

## Medium Term

- Bridge Expertise - Share best practice on successful approaches to engaging with communities and their needs e.g. CRAG
- Scaling up models of successful community-volunteer engagement - Share best practice (in terms of running a space)
- Community Volunteer Map - places and spaces where volunteer currently takes place locally

## Longer Term

- Leverage community 'assets' - Support 'anchor' organisations to develop activities in line with community needs
- Explore pop up spaces for volunteer led events
- Support volunteers to lead projects in their area through training and learning from other areas – cross pollinate ideas

# Outcome 5

There are diverse, quality and inclusive opportunities for everyone to get involved and stay involved

Stirling's volunteering community come from a wide range of backgrounds and age groups, however it is recognised that some groups such as those with additional support needs, from more disadvantaged areas or ethnic minority backgrounds can be harder to reach than others.

We know that  
of Stirling's adult population  
have a long term physical or  
mental health condition

23%

Since COVID, anecdotal feedback from the sector suggests that the number of formal volunteering opportunities for those with additional support needs have reduced despite social distancing restrictions being removed. Many factors have contributed to this including a reduction in the capacity of VIO teams to support volunteers or a change to the model of services offered e.g. less face to face.

## What currently works well in Stirling

There are many great examples of diverse, inclusive and quality opportunities to volunteer where the success factors needed to help everyone get involved and stay involved are present. These include where volunteers feel valued and are having fun, are listened to in terms of what they want to achieve and given the help to achieve it as well as opportunities to progress, learn new skills and gain qualifications.

### Connecting Communities

Dunblane Dementia Café – intergenerational volunteering to support the local community, engaging with local school children, supporting them to achieve their Saltire and Duke of Edinburgh awards and connecting with other local groups to help run a memory café for those living with and caring for those with dementia as well as delivering food parcels and gifts to older residents .

### Sustainable Volunteering Model

Jonsey's Boxing club in Pleun – an area that is within the top 20% most disadvantaged areas in Scotland, this small club has an honesty box approach and annual fundraiser to help support the running of the club. They have a sustainable volunteering and engagement culture where boxers are encouraged to volunteer to support younger/ less experienced boxers to help others.

Forth Valley Recovery community uses a similar approach, where part of individuals' recovery journey is the encouragement to volunteer to help sustain participation opportunities.

## Where are the opportunities?

### Breaking Down Barriers

We know there is still a lot of work to do to engage more uniformly across Stirling's communities from a younger age and for longer. With a cost of living crisis, financial barriers will only increase for potential and existing volunteers who may no longer be able to afford travel to their volunteer opportunity.

There are other barriers such as mental health and confidence to take the first step to volunteering can be one of the biggest barriers. Many see volunteering as out of reach for them or 'not for them'. Focusing effort on challenging stereotypes can help with this.

### Re-engaging with Older / Lapsed Volunteers

Since COVID, many older volunteers have not returned to volunteering due to ongoing health conditions, anxiety about COVID or a loss in confidence. Understanding their needs and motivations can help VIOs to reach them.

### Reducing Age Restrictions

As a young person it can still be challenging to access opportunities where age restrictions exist which are not always necessary for the opportunity. Increasing awareness and support to organisations on engaging young people can help to open up opportunities.

### Investing in Skills

Greater access to equality and diversity training can support organisations to engage with those furthest from volunteering.



# Ideas for Action

Short Term - how your organisation can contribute

- Sign post to free support e.g. Cycle to Volunteer scheme
- Volunteering Opportunities - Promote Stirling's Volunteer Portal for accessing opportunities
- Share the success stories of supported volunteering

Medium Term

- Directory of volunteer support pots/ access funds
- Supporting Digital Practice and Digital Access in Volunteering - Development and promotion of digital opportunities
- Develop stronger relationships with schools to support external vol opps beyond DofE – e.g. volunteer feeder pathway programme

Longer Term

- Shared training/ best practice from those already working with volunteers with barriers
- Accessibility training
- Establish a common understanding of inclusive volunteering - awareness raising programme within VIOs of barriers and how to overcome

# Conclusion & Next Steps

The national VAP is a 10 year plan and this is Stirling's initial response to it covering the period 2023-2026

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## Implementation of this Action Plan

The aspiration for this action plan is that it is embraced by all organisations involved in volunteering within Stirling or who have a shared interest in increasing and widening volunteering participation. For each outcome, a set of ideas for actions have been identified; these include short-term 'quick wins' that can be adopted by Volunteering Involving Organisations (VIOs) without additional resources by drawing on the best practice examples highlighted within the plan or making small changes.

The medium to longer term ideas for action require additional development and resources. The intention is for these to be taken forward by the SAWV Steering Group using the Volunteering Action Canvas to help develop and refine.

## SAWV Steering Group

Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise (SVE) will continue to lead the SAWV steering group (subject to funding), with overall responsibility for the implementation of this local volunteering action plan alongside its key partners:

- Stirling Council
- Police Scotland
- Plus Forth Valley
- The Thistles Centre
- University of Stirling Student Union
- Active Stirling
- NHS Forth Valley
- Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park

## Monitoring & Evaluation

As part of the implementation process, a monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed to track the actions taken forward and assess their impact.

The same goals from the VAP will be used to measure success based on metrics agreed by the partners:

1. Increase volunteering participation
2. Widen access to Volunteering
3. Listen to Volunteers
4. Provide great experiences

# Programme

The following table includes some high level dates for implementation of the plan:

Milestone	Start Date	End Date	Comments
Stirling VAP launched		March 2023	
Steering Group re-established & ToRs agreed	April 2023	April 2023	
Short term actions developed and implemented	April 2023	March 2024	
Medium term actions developed and implemented	April 2023	March 2025	Subject to funding
Long term actions developed and implemented	April 2023	March 2026	Subject to funding

# Appendix A

## Life Cycle of a Volunteer

### Lifecycle of a Volunteer

STAGE  
01



#### School Years

From the end of Primary school children are encouraged to volunteer through Saltire and Duke of Edinburgh schemes.

Examples of barriers to volunteering at each stage

**PRACTICAL**  
No one to give them a lift to their volunteer placement

STAGE  
02



#### Further Edu or Employment

Schools, Career fayres and FE institutions promote volunteering and offer additional accreditation schemes e.g. MyStirling Awards, alongside Saltire (12-25 years)

**LOW DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT**  
No internet access at home

STAGE  
03



#### Having a Family

If not already, individuals tend to become more engaged with their local community through baby groups, schools, sports etc

**FINANCIAL**  
No affordable childcare available

STAGE  
04



#### Career / Return to Work

Opportunities to volunteer through work vary by employer. Those changing roles or returning to work can seek out volunteering as a pathway to employment or may continue to volunteer with local or children's clubs.

**WORK PRESSURES**  
Demanding career

STAGE  
05



#### Retirement

Volunteers find they have more time and able to give their time to volunteering. They also may rely on support from local groups themselves e.g. during COVID

**HEALTH**  
Poor health or disability

# Appendix B

## References

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1. Scotland's Volunteering Action Plan, Scottish Government, 2022
2. The Stirling Plan 2017- 2027 Local Outcomes Improvement Plan, Stirling Community Planning Partnership, 2018
3. Volunteering for All : Our National Framework, Scottish Government, 2019
4. Scottish Household Survey (SHS), 2018