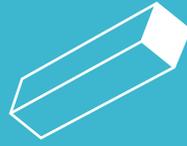




EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE

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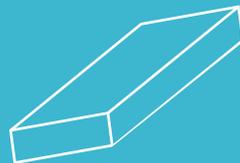
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VOLUNTEERING
INFRASTRUCTURE
IN EUROPE



SCOTLAND



AUTHOR
John Lee,
Volunteer
Development
Scotland

CO-AUTHOR
Adrian Murtagh,
Volunteer
Development
Scotland



1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE

CONCEPT DEFINITION

As will be discussed below, there is no legal structure or definition of volunteering in Scotland. Scotland does not have a volunteering law.

Scotland has a devolved government and parliament and volunteering is an issue that has been devolved to the Scottish government. Volunteering has become highly visible in public policy in Scotland. Between 2004 and 2009 the Scottish government had a national volunteering strategy with Volunteer Development Scotland as a key partner. During this period there was also a national network of locally based Volunteer Centres.

Since 2009, however, the Scottish government has actively attempted to intervene in the local volunteering/voluntary sector infrastructure by encouraging the development of Third Sector Interfaces – single organisations that bring together Volunteer Centres and other key voluntary sector organisations at a local level. This process is still developing.

Volunteer Development Scotland remains as the single national centre for research, policy and training for volunteering in Scotland.

2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

The Scottish government conducts an annual survey on volunteering (the Scottish Household Survey). This survey suggests that 30% of the population of Scotland are regularly involved in formal volunteering activities. This figure has been constant for the past decade.

Participation is generally evenly spread across age groups and levels of male to female participation are roughly equal. There are higher levels of volunteering in rural areas. There are noticeably lower levels of volunteering in the most disadvantaged areas.

Volunteering in activities related to children and young people remain the most popular.

There are higher levels of volunteering in rural areas, but noticeably lower levels in the most disadvantaged and needful areas.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

It should be noted that in Scotland (and in the UK) volunteers do not have a legal status and there is no generally accepted legal definition of volunteering. Nor is there anything resembling a 'volunteer law' as is the case in several other countries. This has important implications for any proposed move towards a rights based approach to volunteering. The United Kingdom does not have a written constitution and issues of 'rights' and citizenship are not always as well defined as they are in other EU member states.



In the UK the most beneficial approach generally has been to keep legislation at a distance from volunteering – in part to maintain the independence of volunteer involving organisations and to avoid the State at national or local level ‘owning’ volunteering in any way. There is an equally strong desire to ensure that the State does not own or control people’s individual willingness to contribute to society.

In our opinion the current view of most formal volunteering organisations is to retain the practice based approach, with little desire to develop a rights based model. Organisations are very wary about any measures which could inhibit them easily attracting and sustaining volunteers. The preference is very much for a light touch in terms of legislation and regulation. Although it should be noted that the views of volunteers themselves have probably not been sufficiently surveyed in relation to these issues – in an increasingly rights-orientated society the driver for change should come from volunteers themselves. It could become increasingly problematic to have a large minority of the population (1.2 million formal volunteers in Scotland) who have no legal status or definition and who enjoy no protections or means of redress under employment or anti discrimination legislation.

Because of the natural diversity and spontaneity of volunteering, one fear about the prospect of any legislation on volunteering is that volunteering could be used mainly or solely to meet public policy objectives and could even become mandated by government in some way. At the moment there seems to be little or no legal framework for developing legislation on volunteering in any of the nations of the UK. In a recent case concerning volunteers and employment law, for example, the verdict of the Court of Appeal was that there seemed to be no benefit in extending employment law to volunteers.

4. STRUCTURE OF THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR INVOLVED IN VOLUNTEERING

Approximately 80% of all volunteers in Scotland volunteer with voluntary (i.e. non-profit) organisations.

It has been estimated that there are 45,000 voluntary sector organisations in Scotland. Public sector contracts and grants make up about 42% of the sector’s funding. This is a mixture of commercial contracts to deliver services and small grants.

All of these organisations will involve volunteers at some level.



5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Approximately 15% of volunteering currently takes place within the public sector in Scotland. With the Scottish government, Volunteer Development Scotland was a key development and delivery partner for the Volunteering Strategy for the National Health Service. The public sector may represent the next “emerging market” in volunteering.

Volunteering also takes place within local government (Scotland has 32 “local authorities”). Volunteer Development Scotland is working with local government to develop volunteering in these areas.

There is also a growing interest from the corporate sector in developing Employer Supported Volunteering programmes.

6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Scottish government budget for the voluntary sector in 2012-13 is of approximately £24 million.

The Scottish government helps to fund Volunteer Development Scotland and the Third Sector Interfaces (mentioned above). The Scottish government also provides funding to enable criminal record checks for volunteers in the voluntary sector to be carried out free of charge.

As mentioned above public sector contracts and grants make up about 42% of the voluntary non-profit) sector’s funding. This is a mixture of commercial contracts to deliver services and small grants. However, it has been estimated that 95% of the total funding to the sector goes to just 7% of the largest organisations.

Administered by the Voluntary Action Fund, the Scottish government also provides grant funding for small community based volunteering programmes and opportunities.

The Scottish government budget for the voluntary sector in 2012-13 is approximately £24 million.

7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

As mentioned above the main source of data on volunteering is the Scottish household survey produced annually by the Scottish government.

Volunteer Development Scotland is currently undertaking a major programme of new research which may well be of interest for the theme of this publication, when it is complete.

8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

As volunteering has become more formalised and indeed more professionalized, Scotland, along with the other nations of the UK, has developed a practice based approach (with a strong focus on the management and support of volunteers) rather than a rights based approach to volunteering. Both these models are aimed at achieving the same outcomes: ensuring a safe and rewarding volunteer experience ultimately for the benefit of society.

The implications of this is that an increasingly delicate balance has to be struck between a situation where, on the one hand, volunteers do not enjoy the protection afforded by employment and anti-discrimination legislation but where on the other hand volunteering is a flexible and relatively un-regulated activity. There are very few legal obstacles to becoming a volunteer and volunteers have very few responsibilities. In fact much effort has been directed at deliberately exempting volunteers from legislation such as the *National Minimum Wage Act*.

An exception to this is legislation designed to protect children and other vulnerable people, but even here not all volunteering roles, even those involving work with children and vulnerable people are included within the vetting system. However, there is a danger that in some public sector organisations the costs of suitability checks could be passed on to the volunteers themselves and as such may place barriers in the way of many people.

A key part of this practice based approach is ensuring ethics and quality standards for the managers of volunteers. There are 'national occupational standards' for volunteers managers and Volunteer Development Scotland high quality accredited (and non accredited) training for volunteers' managers.

9. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteer Development Scotland has developed a unique web based resource to enable volunteers to find out about opportunities related to their interests. These opportunities are broken down locally and provide a high level of detail. This resource can be accessed at www.volunteerscotland.org.uk. This resource has been highly successful in raising awareness of opportunities and allowing potential volunteers to access these opportunities.

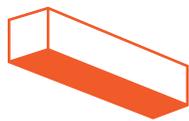
10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

Although volunteering is an issued devolved to the Scottish government at the EU level Scotland is represented by the United Kingdom government.

An increasingly delicate balance has to be struck between volunteers not enjoying the protection afforded by employment and anti-discrimination legislation and volunteering as a flexible and relatively un-regulated activity.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

We would strongly recommend robust research on the impact on volunteering at local level of the development of the Third Sector Interfaces. We do not yet know if the move towards Interfaces is adding value to the development of volunteering at local level in Scotland.



Resources

The Scottish Government – Third Sector www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/15300

Voluntary Action Fund www.voluntaryactionfund.org.uk

Volunteer Development Scotland www.volunteerdevelopmentscotland.org.uk