

Dundee Children & Families Services

Volunteer Strategy



This strategy has the focus of volunteering within Children and Families Services to achieve better outcomes for children and families. It has been created with the knowledge and understanding that across Dundee there is no organisation that has been immune to the changes in volunteering that we have witnessed over the last few years.

We have seen a bolder approach with new ideas being piloted, an increase in collaboration which brings together knowledge, experience and skills, with discussions being a far cry from a “one cap fits all” approach.

It is clear we have moved with the times, though the times have been very challenging, and we have sought the solutions that are straightforward to implement, workable within organisations capacity, and reflect our commitment to improve the volunteer journey, so it holds tangible benefits.

Within this strategy you will find defined areas to guide and develop staff, streamline volunteer recruitment, and ways for people to evidence their learning and experiences of volunteering. We bring accessible resources and methods to enhance learning within the context of children and families.



Testimonial from a community member who received volunteer support from a local Children and Families Service

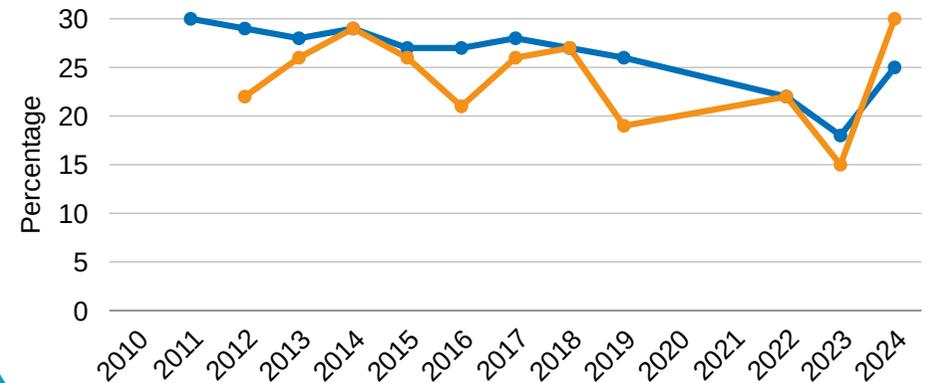
“The role was a volunteer befriender, but so much more, a mentor and someone to support me if I needed to go to appointments. They gave me the positive influence in life, this made me want to live life again. They did an amazing job to find the right match for me. She felt like a friend. We clicked from first day. People who have experienced what I have need the genuine feeling that someone understands. We need authenticity, an empathy exists. They need to understand your struggle. Over the years I have been to a lot of places, but there have only been a few that I have engaged with that I have felt heard. I felt that I found my voice again”

The Volunteering Landscape in 2025

Over the last decade the numbers of those engaging in formal volunteering had declined significantly. National figures in 2023 recorded adult volunteering at 18%, and Dundee was sitting at 15%. This depleted figure was reflective of the impact of the cost of living, the legacy of the pandemic, changed work patterns, and higher demands on free time. This meant many were unable to commit to volunteering, or they were unable to remain. Finally now we are seeing an encouraging turn and numbers are increasing back to pre-pandemic levels.

There has been as no single identifiable factor which has caused this change, though it is very welcome. All those with a vested interest in volunteering have appreciated the resilience and commitment within this sector, but now hold an acute awareness of the vulnerability that major external pressures have for volunteers.

Scottish Household Survey % Rate of Formal Volunteering



National
Figures

Dundee
Figures

This strategy recommends new methods to be implemented in Dundee. These have come through careful collaborative work in seeking out opinions on developing plans and priorities in the future years. Changes have already been implemented by organisations to adapt to reduced volunteering numbers, including having more flexible and accessible conditions to fit around the volunteer.

Children and Families organisations and community groups want to be able to extend their services, if it is within their capacity, and review the ask of the community. They are open to development of areas of work; recognising that when a volunteer programme is run, it must be responsive to the needs of those they support. When changes are considered, they must be with the aim to be both effective and sustainable. We are not starting from scratch as Dundee has a strong history of volunteering commitment and drive to make positive changes.

The background features a teal color with a central white cloud-like shape containing text. Surrounding this shape are stylized human figures in purple (top) and orange (bottom), all within a blue wavy border.

Our Vision

Dundee will be a city where the people are inspired and supported to volunteer to achieve better outcomes for every child and family.

Quote from a local volunteer

"I find it very rewarding to see the young person smile and laugh and building up a trusting relationship. I also like the fact that I am having a positive impact on families that I help and can give parents much needed respite."

Overview of Children and Families Services and the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund

Children and Families Services are made up of public, private, and third sector organisations and are committed to giving children, young people, and families in Dundee the best opportunities available to them. The services strive to find a way for the families to achieve their potential, with the right support at the right time, whilst safeguarding them from possible risk and harm.

This is at the heart of what this strategy aims to achieve.

In line with **The Promise**, volunteering across Dundee needs to offer families different options of support, opportunity, and exploration. This will allow families to become more resilient whilst tackling inequalities and barriers to accessing services. Volunteering with these services has a focus on early intervention; a form of support aimed at improving outcomes for children, young people, and families and will help prevent an escalation in need or risk.

The range of volunteering roles can feature group work, play activities, mentoring, advice and guidance, family sessions, and working with individuals. The people they support may be impacted by substance use, adverse life experiences, looking after a family member who needs additional care, or are struggling to adapt after a critical event. Involvement may be short term and include simple changes, or a variety of support and interventions over a period of time. In line with The Promise, support should be what the family themselves identify as being needed at that time.

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Quote from Children & Families Services beneficiary

It was so good to have someone I could trust to talk to without any judgment, and at the same time just have some normal back in my life.

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Quote from Children & Families Services beneficiary

I have a volunteer for my son A, he is 11. He is absolutely brilliant. My son thinks that the volunteer is just for him to do activities with but really its amazing for me, its changed things for me as I get some peaceful time. I have other kids who are younger and it means that they get more time with me. It feels like we can breathe.

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Our Aims

We commit to embed a robust, inclusive, flexible approach to volunteering in Children and Families services across Dundee, in order to attract and retain volunteers.



We strive to encourage greater participation in volunteering, through streamlining initial recruitment processes, increasing visibility and offering a range of accessible learning opportunities. We are working collaboratively to implement a unified method of recording the hours spent volunteering, the skills developed, and the learning accessed; as well as volunteers being able to reflect on their experiences.

We will highlight the impact of volunteer involvement, for those they support, the community, and the organisation.

As a result:

- Volunteering will be recognised as a positive and inviting experience for all involved.
- The benefits will be clear, tangible and highlighted and publicised.



We aspire to increase the diversity of volunteers, the roles, and the activities they support, to reflect the communities in Dundee and be responsive to the needs of children and families.

To achieve this :

- We will seek to understand where there are gaps in volunteer roles and determine the viability of these roles within the scope of a volunteering programme.
- We will provide support in developing these roles with information and guidance.
- We will focus on the gaps in the diversity of volunteers, and work on targeted approaches to narrow these gaps to maintain and improve the impact for children and families.

We will maximise good practice and share learning, training, and resources to support volunteering programmes

We do this by:

- Encouraging collaboration with services in sharing their training, both existing and new, around children and families to support and expand the opportunities that are available to learn within this area of work.
- Making specific training and guidance available and accessible for organisations and volunteers, shared through direct routes such as the [GoVolunteerDundee](#) digital platform, and a [guidance resource](#) for organisations held on DVVA website.
- Promoting opportunities to learn, share, and collaborate through existing networks such as Volunteer Coordinators Network.



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Quote from a local volunteer

“My volunteering experience has played a huge role in my studies over the past 6 years. The personal help, support and encouragement I received from the coordinator also contributed. I have now achieved my degree and this, together with the knowledge, skills and experience I acquired whilst volunteering, has helped me to secure a new job.”

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An Understanding of Volunteering

Volunteers need to be seen as a key component to service delivery within organisations and within community resources. Volunteers should be viewed as an additional asset to service delivery. Groups and organisations recognise that the running of a successful volunteering programme requires the investment of staff, resources, and funding to encourage participation and retention.

After going through a critical period where the impact of significant external changes throughout the last decade altered peoples' ability and availability to volunteer, we experienced a worrying decline and exposed the vulnerability of reliance on volunteering programmes. This along with increased need for additional support from Children and Families Services, has meant we needed to develop a different approach to volunteering. A more flexible approach should be seen within the volunteering journey, with an ability to adapt to changes, alongside providing an accessible and recognisable pathway for volunteering.

Generally, a definition of volunteering has three key components:

- The activity benefits people outside your immediate family.
- The activity is unpaid.
- A person actively and freely chooses to undertake the activity.

Volunteering can bring measurable benefits to the volunteer whilst contributing to the local community. The skills that volunteers can build up are valuable for future career goals and to support educational learning, as well as metaskills such as communication, teamwork, and using own initiative. Gaining the hands-on experience is a well recorded benefit.

Individuals that are supported by volunteers benefit from having strengthened access to local resources and activities, and the opportunity to reduce isolation and learn ways to help themselves and their families. For many families it is simply a valued respite time.

Organisations and groups also benefit from a volunteering programme, as volunteers bring in their experiences, their skills, and their time. This means that the children, young people, and families will receive support in different ways. Whether helping to access community resources or building up confidence, this early intervention and prevention work is vital.

Formal Volunteering

Formal volunteering involves giving unpaid help through a group, club or organisation including public, private, and voluntary organisations. Formal volunteer roles typically have set hours and clear role descriptions, and will involve support from an allocated member of staff within the group, club, or organisation. Examples of formal volunteering include befriending, play group activities, youth work, mentoring, advocacy, reading and literacy activities, short break care, and supporting family financial wellbeing.



Informal Volunteering

Informal volunteering is when an individual provides time to another individual who is not a relative. This is unpaid and is usually ad-hoc, with the hours of volunteering time unmonitored. Informal volunteering is not coordinated by an organisation and this kind of volunteering takes place in a less formal setting. It is unlikely to be set days/times or role descriptors. Examples of informal volunteering include supporting a neighbour with shopping, helping at a local church, or looking after a friend's children.



Plans, Priorities & Key Activities

1

Strengthen volunteer infrastructure to create a convenient approach to volunteer management across Children and Families Services.

We will achieve this by:

- Reviewing, revising and implementing standardised policies, procedures and guidance to support volunteers to carry out roles safely and effectively.
- Producing a **guidance resource**, which starts from early considerations all the way through the volunteer journey.
- Creating an online platform - **GoVolunteerDundee** which gives organisations visibility. This is a place to highlight the organisation, promote their services, share news, and recruit volunteers alongside linking to mandatory onboarding training. It allows access to further training and learning within the children and families' field. Volunteers and organisations can communicate directly through the platform. GoVolunteerDundee will streamline the recruitment process and enable smoother portability of volunteers. Initial onboarding mandatory training will not need repeating, and the volunteering profiles can be viewed securely whilst still protecting their privacy. It is a safe space for volunteers.
- Measuring success, patterns, and progress of goals through regular monitoring and reporting through analytic data from **GoVolunteerDundee**.

2

Identify gaps in volunteering and seek to make roles more accessible and inclusive.

We will achieve this by:

- Seeking to understand where the gaps in volunteer diversity and inclusion exist, and working collaboratively to act on gaps identified.
- Taking forward targeted action to recruit more people from different equality groups, and we will identify creative and innovative approaches to encourage a more diverse range of people to engage with volunteer opportunities across Dundee.
- Focusing on identifying different roles to meet the needs of children and families by involving those families, volunteers, and services whilst being aware of any existing limitations within capacity and resources.

3

Volunteers feel recognised and valued.

We will achieve this by:

- Investing in the continuous development of our volunteers by creating a method to evidence learning, reflection, and experience through the [Dundee Volunteer Passport](#).
- Embedding resources on [GoVolunteerDundee](#) platform that are accessible, to enhance learning within the many aspects of early intervention and prevention work with children and families.
- Using the [guidance document](#) to highlight the good practice of recognising, valuing, and rewarding volunteers.

Above all, we want our volunteers to enjoy their role and the opportunities it allows them access to, as well as the positive impact it will have for children and families across Dundee. We know that our volunteers value feeling engaged in meaningful activities that they care about and that they have the opportunity to develop new skills and build confidence.

We will continue to thank, celebrate, and value our volunteers in appreciation of the significance of the enormous role that they play within Dundee.

Acknowledgements

There are key organisations who have contributed to the strategy, the volunteer passport, and the volunteer platform that DVVA would like to recognise:

- Aberlour
- Active Dundee
- Barnardos
- Dundee Womens Aid
- One Parent Families Scotland
- Tayside Council on Alcohol

We will be continuing this collaboration and build the network further, as these strengthened relationships have been instrumental in producing the outcomes that would have been unachievable without the depth of understanding, experience, and commitment.

This strategy has been developed in partnership and is underpinned by the Promise Principles keeping the 5 foundations of Voice, Family, Care, People, and Scaffolding at its centre.

