



Volunteering Strategy 2026-2029



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Foreword

Volunteering is at the heart of Glasgow Life. It reflects the generosity, creativity and resilience of our city, and the people who make it what it is.

Every day, volunteers across Glasgow give their time, energy and skills to support others, enhance our services and strengthen communities. Their contribution is invaluable, not only in what they do, but in the sense of belonging, connection and opportunity they create.

In recent years we have made significant progress with our volunteer offer.

Since launching the Glasgow Life Volunteering Strategy 2023–26, we welcomed an internal audit carried out by Glasgow City Council. It provided assurance on the effectiveness of many of our volunteer management practices while identifying opportunities for further improvement. This has supported the development of a more consistent, high-quality approach to volunteer management.

We reviewed and improved our learning and development support for colleagues, producing a new Best Practice Guide for Volunteer Managers, a training video and a toolkit of templates and resources.

Improving the accessibility and inclusivity of our online and printed resources, expanding the ways people connect with us through initiatives such as a freephone number and greater participation in community events, along with strengthening stakeholder relationships, we have

increased engagement with those traditionally underrepresented and achieved a better reflection of Glasgow's diverse communities.

Through active participation in national volunteering forums and networks, sharing best practice and improving internal communication, we have successfully raised the visibility and profile of the impact of volunteering across Glasgow Life and among external stakeholders.

Listening and responding to volunteer feedback, we have further strengthened volunteer recognition and support. An expanded programme of social activities has been introduced to reflect volunteers' diverse interests, leading to increased awareness of Glasgow Life's services and fostering stronger relationships between volunteers and colleagues.

A particular highlight was the commissioning of the Volunteer Recognition Tree, located in the café at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall. This art installation has been immensely popular with volunteers, each engraved leaf recognising an individual's commitment to Glasgow Life. The tree provides a lasting and visible tribute to the dedication and invaluable contribution of our volunteers. Many volunteers take great pride in sharing this recognition with family and friends, and each year new leaves are unveiled as part of our annual volunteer celebration, ensuring that their contributions continue to be acknowledged and celebrated.



However, we know there is more to do.

As Glasgow continues to evolve, so too must our approach to volunteering. We must ensure opportunities are accessible to all, reflective of our diverse communities, and responsive to changing expectations.

This strategy sets out our ambition for the next three years: to place volunteering firmly at the centre of Glasgow Life, to lead with inclusion and partnership, and to create high-quality experiences that benefit individuals, communities

and the city as a whole.

By working together with volunteers, colleagues and stakeholders, we will build a volunteering culture that is inclusive, ambitious and impactful.

Executive Summary

Volunteering is a powerful force for positive change. It enhances front-line services, strengthens communities and contributes to the social, mental, physical and economic wellbeing of Glasgow.

Glasgow Life has strong foundations for volunteering. Opportunities have diversified, volunteering is increasingly visible, and volunteers continue to make a significant contribution across our cultural, sporting and community programmes.

In our 2026 volunteer survey, volunteers spoke positively about the impact volunteering has on their wellbeing, confidence and sense of purpose. They described feeling connected, valued and part of something bigger than themselves.

Volunteers also identified opportunities for improvement, particularly around communication, recognition, learning and development, progression pathways and consistency of experience across programmes. These findings were echoed through engagement with senior leaders, colleagues and Volunteer Managers, who recognised the strengths of Glasgow Life’s volunteering offer while highlighting challenges around capacity, resources, visibility and the need for greater organisational support and consistency.

Glasgow Life benefits from a highly experienced network of colleagues who design, deliver and support volunteering opportunities across a diverse range of programmes from supporting service users in our sport, cultural and leisure venues including Health Walks, CoderDojo, Museum Collection –



learning, research and guides; and major cultural and community events.

Established over a decade ago, the Glasgow Life Volunteer Managers’ Forum continues to provide a valuable platform for peer support, shared



learning and collaboration, strengthening volunteer management practice across the charity.

However, barriers to participation remain, pathways are not always consistent, and the capacity required to support high-quality volunteering can be stretched. At the same time, expectations are changing, with increasing demand for flexible, inclusive and accessible opportunities.

This strategy responds to these challenges with ambition. It sets out how we will strengthen the foundations for volunteering, create outstanding volunteer experiences, support volunteers and colleagues to thrive, and ensure volunteering is recognised as a valued and integral part of Glasgow Life. By investing in people, partnerships, systems and culture, we will grow the impact of volunteering and ensure it continues to enrich lives, strengthen communities and contribute to a better Glasgow for all.



Developing this strategy

As with our inaugural strategy in 2023, this strategy has been developed using a person-centred approach, ensuring that the views and experiences of those involved in volunteering have shaped our priorities and future direction.

To inform the strategy, we consulted Heads of Service, Senior Managers and Volunteer Managers to explore the opportunities, challenges and future priorities for volunteering at Glasgow Life. These sessions were facilitated by an external volunteering consultant and sector expert, with funding support from Team Kinetic, our volunteering database provider.

We also engaged directly with volunteers to ensure their voices were central to the process. Volunteers from across all Glasgow Life service areas participated in a series of in-person workshops helping us better understand their experiences, perceptions and aspirations for volunteering. For those unable to attend the workshops, an online survey provided an additional opportunity to share their views and contribute to the development of this strategy.



The Case for Change

Volunteering is changing.

Across the UK and Scotland, participation is unequal. People experiencing inequalities are less likely to volunteer, and barriers such as time, cost, confidence or access continue to limit opportunities for many.

At the same time, expectations are shifting. People want flexible roles, meaningful experiences and opportunities that connect to their wider lives, including skills development, wellbeing and employability.

Within Glasgow Life, we have made significant progress; however, we must go further. Feedback from volunteers, Volunteer Managers and senior management highlights challenges with the recruitment process, how we use volunteer data, and the capacity required to support high-quality experiences.

This is not just about improving systems – it is about fundamentally rethinking how we design volunteering to reduce barriers and enable more people to take part.

This strategy is our response:

- To remove barriers and widen access.
- To ensure consistency and quality.
- To strengthen our role as a leader in volunteering.

- To deliver greater impact for people and communities.

The opportunity is clear: by investing in volunteering, we invest in Glasgow.

Align with Public Service Reform

Volunteering is already a strong example of Glasgow Life’s preventative approach and aligns with Scotland’s Public Service Reform Strategy, which prioritises prevention, joined-up services and efficiency. Quality volunteering experiences create added social value by reducing isolation and loneliness, improving health and wellbeing, supporting employability and skills development, strengthening community resilience, and tackling inequality through more inclusive participation.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commitment

Glasgow Life is committed to reducing barriers and increasing access to volunteering through an inclusive and equitable approach.

We recognise that barriers exist and that participation is not equal. Our ambition is to actively remove those barriers and create opportunities that reflect the diversity of Glasgow.

We will:

- Design volunteering with inclusion at its core.
- Provide tailored support based on individual needs.
- Support people to access volunteering opportunities that are meaningful, rewarding and aligned with their interests, strengths and goals.
- Create safe, welcoming and supportive environments.
- Inclusion is not an addition to this strategy, it is fundamental to its success.



Strategic Objectives

1. Supporting Volunteering

Ensure volunteering is recognised, resourced and supported as a core part of Glasgow Life's work.

Glasgow Life has a strong infrastructure for volunteering, including experienced and skilled colleagues, established volunteer programmes, a volunteering management system provided by Team Kinetic, networks, regular internal communication, a robust reputation for delivering high-profile, large-scale volunteer programmes and events, policies and best practice, and our Volunteer Managers' Forum. We will build on these foundations to ensure that volunteering is sustainably resourced, effectively coordinated and embedded within service planning. By investing in the people, systems and processes that support volunteering, we will create the conditions for volunteering to thrive across the organisation.

In addition to Glasgow Life volunteers, we will continue to support volunteer involving organisations through funding opportunities and engagement at our culture and leisure venues.



2. Making Volunteering Accessible and Inclusive

Create a volunteering experience that is welcoming, more accessible and meaningful for everyone.

Volunteers already make an important contribution to Glasgow Life, bringing their skills, experiences and passion to support communities, programmes and events, learning and participation. We will ensure that every stage of the volunteer journey, from enquiry and recruitment through to support and recognition is person-centred, more inclusive, responsive and accessible. By removing barriers and responding to individual needs, we will enable more people from Glasgow's diverse communities to participate and benefit from volunteering. We



We will focus on six priorities:

1. Supporting volunteering



2. Making volunteering more accessible and inclusive



3. Delivering quality volunteering experiences and development



4. Valuing volunteers and sharing their impact



5. Leadership and culture of volunteering



6. Partnerships and sector leadership



We are committed to ensuring volunteering is representative of Glasgow's communities, actively removing barriers to participation.



will continue to work with established stakeholders and networks, and explore a menu of opportunities including; “try before you apply”, mentoring and buddying programmes and volunteering with friends and family.

3. Delivering Quality Volunteering Experiences and Development

Deliver a consistent, connected and high-quality volunteering experience that supports learning and development.

Excellent volunteer management practice exists throughout Glasgow Life, supported by experienced colleagues. Through mechanisms such as the Volunteer Managers’ Forum, colleagues already share expertise, learning and lived experience of supporting volunteers. We will strengthen this collaborative approach by reviewing tools and ways of working, ensuring a consistent and high-quality experience for volunteers regardless of where they choose to volunteer.

We will continue to review and enhance our Volunteer Management System to ensure it is accessible, efficient and user-friendly for both volunteers and colleagues. We will also invest in robust evaluation frameworks that help us measure, understand and demonstrate the social impact of volunteering, strengthening decision-making, promoting achievements and maximising the value of our programmes.

Building on relationships with delivery partners,

we will explore more defined ways of working to benefit everyone involved in delivering events and programmes.

Many Glasgow Life volunteers develop new skills, broaden their experiences, strengthen social connections and progress into further volunteering, education or employment. We will continue to enhance learning and development opportunities that help people achieve their goals while strengthening the quality and impact of volunteering across the charity.

For volunteers who wish to use volunteering as a pathway to employability, we will promote accredited learning opportunities, provide references where appropriate, and signpost individuals to relevant internal and external support, including the Glasgow Life Family Finances Team. We will also continue to expand opportunities for Employer Supported Volunteering, both by encouraging Glasgow Life colleagues to volunteer and by working with partner organisations to create meaningful volunteering experiences that benefit individuals, communities and Glasgow Life.

4. Valuing Volunteers

Ensure volunteers feel valued and recognised for their contributions, and that the impact of volunteering is effectively communicated and celebrated.

Recognition is central to a positive volunteer experience. Glasgow Life has strengthened its approach through social events and annual



celebrations, in addition to local recognition of volunteers in individual services and venues, including the Volunteer Recognition Tree, which acknowledges the commitment and contribution of volunteers across the charity. We will continue to develop meaningful and inclusive opportunities for volunteers to inform and shape volunteer programme development, celebrate achievements, share stories of impact and highlight the vital contribution volunteers make to Glasgow Life and communities across Glasgow.

Listening to volunteers, we will develop structured and consistent approaches to communication, building in flexibility to reflect their preferences through established networks and channels. We will also revisit our training and skill development offer for individual programmes and those that benefit everyone.

Volunteering strengthens communities and contributes significantly to Glasgow Life’s vision of creating a great Glasgow life. Through improved communications, presentations, campaigns and storytelling, we have already increased the visibility of volunteering internally and externally. We will continue to promote opportunities more effectively, engage traditionally underrepresented groups and highlight the positive impact volunteers make in communities, culture and sport throughout the city.

This includes the annual Glasgow Sports Awards, the Volunteer Recognition Tree and National Volunteer Week celebrations.

5. Learning and Development

Further embed volunteering within Glasgow Life's culture, leadership and decision-making.

Glasgow Life benefits from a strong commitment to volunteering across all service areas. We will build on this by ensuring leaders at all levels champion volunteering, understand its value and take shared responsibility for supporting volunteers. By further embedding volunteering within organisational planning, decision-making and continuous improvement, we will strengthen and champion a culture where volunteers are welcomed, supported and recognised as an integral part of Glasgow Life, with regular reporting and presentations on our progress to Senior Management.



6. Partnerships and Sector Leadership

Strengthen collaboration and demonstrate leadership within Glasgow and Scotland's volunteering sector.

As one of Glasgow's largest volunteer-involving organisations, Glasgow Life has an important leadership role within the wider volunteering ecosystem. Through our relationships with the Scottish Government, Community Leisure UK, Scottish Volunteering Forum, Volunteer Scotland, National Governing Bodies, Volunteer Glasgow and local Volunteer Involving Organisations, we help shape and support volunteering at local and national levels. We will continue to use our expertise, resources and influence to champion volunteering, share and learn from good practice, highlight need, strengthen the sector and create more inclusive and impactful opportunities for Glasgow's communities.



Demonstrating Impact

This strategy sets the direction and ambition for our volunteering offer over the next three years. It is a public document which describes why change is needed and the strategic objectives to deliver the change.

A three-year action plan is in development to deliver this strategy which will specify the actions and activities, measures, milestones and timescales for each of the strategic objectives set out in this strategy. This will be internally monitored and subject to audit, with an annual public report presented for the duration of the strategy.

Related Documents and References

Glasgow Life Volunteer with us:
glasgowlife.org.uk/volunteer-with-us

Glasgow Life Volunteering Policy:
glasgowlife.org.uk/volunteer-with-glasgow-life

Glasgow Life Kinetic Website:
volunteer.glasgowlife.org.uk

Volunteer Scotland:
volunteerscotland.net

Volunteer Glasgow:
volunteerglasgow.org

Community Leisure UK:
communityleisureuk.org

Scottish Volunteering Forum:
scottishvolunteeringforum.org.uk

Scottish Government:
gov.scot/policies/third-sector/volunteering

Related Strategies



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