

A guide to  
**working &  
volunteering**  
in Scotland's voluntary sector  
3rd edition



**First things first...**

# What is the voluntary sector?

Organisations can be categorised into three key sectors. The “public sector” or “first sector” includes local and national government bodies, national healthcare providers and education providers (like your local council, NHS board or high school). The “private sector” or “second sector” includes commercial businesses and industries, like department stores or utility companies.

The “voluntary sector” or “third sector” is made up of non-governmental and non-profit organisations, from grassroots community groups and village hall committees to social enterprises and registered national charities. Depending on who you speak to, it’s often also described as the not-for-profit sector, charity sector, social economy, social enterprise sector, NGOs (non-government organisations) or civil society.

In 2021, Scotland’s voluntary sector has a turnover of over £8.5billion. As of December 2022, it was made up of over 46,500 organisations, including:

**24,969** registered charities

**20,000** grassroots community groups, sports and arts clubs

**154** housing associations

**6,025** social enterprises

**968** community interest companies

**83** credit unions

**Did you know?**

**Edinburgh Zoo, the National Trust, the Guides, Citizens Advice, Mountain Rescue, Glasgow Science Centre, Edinburgh International Festival, Pitlochry Theatre and the Beatson are all voluntary organisations!**



Ok, so...

# What does the voluntary sector do?

With two new charities registered in Scotland every working day, the sector is vast, vibrant and varied – and changing all the time.

The traditional idea of charities as benevolent organisations simply there to help the poor is being replaced by a modern, progressive voluntary sector which carries out an enormous range of activities to improve people's lives. It does this by:

- ▶ **supporting people**  
through social care, health services and employability programmes
- ▶ **empowering people**  
by giving people a voice and empowering them to take action in their communities and beyond
- ▶ **bringing communities together**  
through social activities, local clubs and community centres
- ▶ **enabling better health and wellbeing**  
through medical research, addiction services, sports facilities and self-help groups, and...
- ▶ **improving our environment**  
through conservation of our land and heritage, and regeneration of our communities.

## A values-led sector

All voluntary sector organisations are values-driven organisations with a social or environmental purpose at their heart, and many are committed to working towards one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals. Find out more at [globalgoals.scot](http://globalgoals.scot)



# Working in the voluntary sector

The voluntary sector is amongst the biggest employers in Scotland employing 135,000 staff, this is more than the 119,000 people employed in Scotlands Food and Drink sector.



With over 40,000 organisations, job opportunities in the voluntary sector are enormously varied, including social care, heritage, sports, culture, health, housing, animals and environment.

The voluntary sector is largely values-led so it offers a unique and rewarding career path. While the reality of working in a sector not primarily motivated by money is that many jobs have slightly lower than average salaries, the trade-off is that charities often have generous flexible working policies, and offer high levels of job satisfaction.

In a recent survey, voluntary sector workers told us why they love what they do:



**40%**

Feeling that we are making a real difference to people and communities



**16%**

The innovation – challenging old thinking, developing new ideas, being creative



**31%**

The people we support



**15%**

The autonomy – independence to be flexible, manage your own workload and try out new ideas



**22%**

Our colleagues, and working in a great team



**15%**

The ethos of the sector



**20%**

The variety of the work – no two days are the same, 'not stuck in an office', new projects

# What kind of jobs are there?

There are hundreds of roles available in the voluntary sector – here are some of the most popular roles:

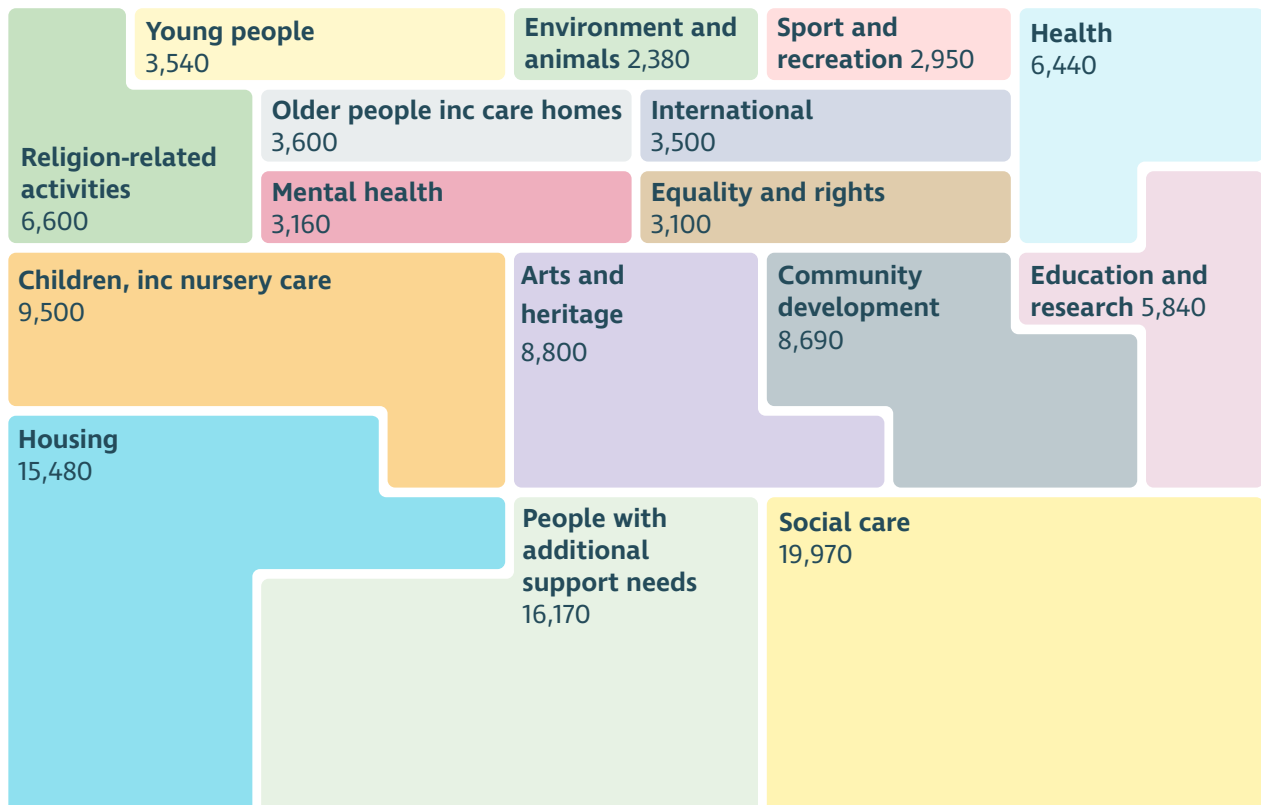


To see what opportunities are available and which organisations are recruiting, visit the Goodmoves website

[goodmoves.com](http://goodmoves.com)

**goodmoves**  
Charity and voluntary sector jobs

## Number of jobs by sector



**Total: 119,720**

NB: This total does not include around 15,000 posts which have not yet been classified

# Volunteering

Scotland has 1.2 million volunteers, with 1 in 4 adults volunteering 136 million hours of support every year.

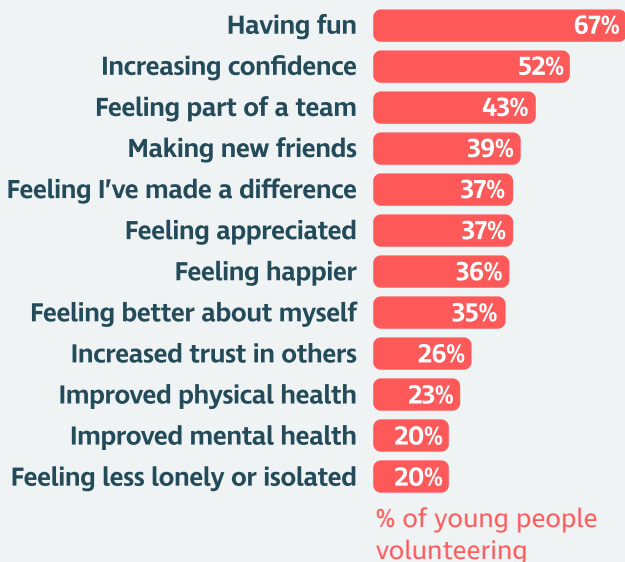
Recent figures show that while the overall figures for volunteering have remained unchanged since 2001, volunteering by young people has been steadily rising. Youth volunteering has grown to nearly double the adult figure, with 1 in 2 young people now volunteering in some way.

Volunteering offers a chance to gain important skills and experience, and can really help CVs and job applications stand out from the crowd when applying to college, university or your first job.

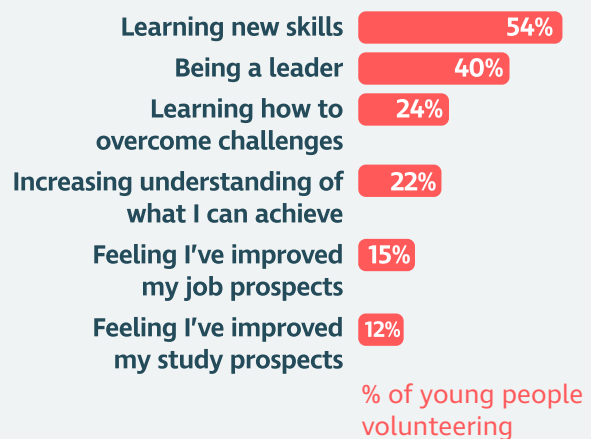
Young people say that the main benefits of volunteering for them are 'having fun' and 'learning new skills'. The graph below shows the many other ways that volunteering can improve confidence and happiness, as well as improve career prospects. Find out more in [Volunteer Scotland's Young People and Volunteering in Scotland 2019 report](#).

## Actual benefits of formal volunteering


### Wellbeing benefits



### Career benefits



## Find volunteering opportunities

-  Find volunteering opportunities and organisations in your local area: [search.volunteerscotland.net](https://search.volunteerscotland.net)
-  Speak to the team at your local **Volunteer Centre** – they can help match you with local organisations based on your skills, interests and values.
-  Identify charities or voluntary groups you would like to support and get in touch directly: [getinvolved.scot/organisations](https://getinvolved.scot/organisations)

# Volunteering support and awards

Many organisations can help young people find great volunteering opportunities and can provide ongoing support, such as **YPI Scotland** which provides an opportunity for secondary school students to directly engage with local charities, and **Project Scotland** which creates quality placements for 16 to 30 year olds.

A number of schemes also formally recognise youth volunteering with a certificate or qualification. The **Saltire Awards** ([saltireawards.org.uk](http://saltireawards.org.uk)) celebrate volunteering by young people aged 12-25, and offer nationally recognised certificates. Other popular schemes include the Youth Achievement Awards run by **Youth Scotland**, and the **Duke of Edinburgh Award**.

Find the right award for you on [awardsnetwork.org](http://awardsnetwork.org)

## Boards and trustees

Many volunteering opportunities are hands-on, but you can also volunteer at a more strategic level by joining the board of a charity, using decision-making and leadership skills to make a real difference. Charities are keen to bring younger voices onto their boards and will give new trustees a full induction and ongoing support. A number of universities and colleges have programmes which promote trusteeship, e.g. **Get on Board**.

## Studying and internships

If you're looking for a summer placement, or need a subject for a dissertation or academic project, the voluntary sector offers many opportunities. Many larger charities offer paid internships, eg **Oxfam** and **Macmillan**, and some can offer a range of research projects, eg **Scottish Wildlife Trust**. Your school, college or university may be able to help find work placements and internship programmes. See back page for more information.



I am making a real difference

I love working with our clients

I love being part of my team

There's so much variety in my job

The third sector is the best place to work



# Further Information

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## **GoodMoves** **goodmoves.org**

Find jobs in Scotland's voluntary sector

## **goodmoves** Charity and voluntary sector jobs

### **Employment support**

#### **scvo.scot/jobs/employability-support**

Employment opportunities for unemployed people within third sector organisations throughout Scotland – particularly those who are more disadvantaged in the labour market

### **Get Involved**

#### **getinvolved.org.uk**

Search for a charity or volunteering opportunity near you

### **Mentoring**

#### **scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk/map**

For info on mentoring projects that support young people

### **My World of Work**

#### **myworldofwork.co.uk/learn-and-train/volunteering**

Useful info on career options, studying, financial support, apprenticeships, internships and volunteering ideas.

### **Network of youth awards in Scotland**

#### **awardsnetwork.org**

Info on volunteering awards for young people aged 10-25 offered by over 20 youth organisations

### **OSCR**

#### **oscr.org.uk**

Information on Scottish charities including a searchable register

### **Prince's Trust**

#### **www.princes-trust.org.uk**

Skills, training and confidence building for 11-30 year olds

### **SCVO**

#### **scvo.scot**

Membership organisation for Scotland's voluntary sector

### **Third Force News**

#### **thirdforcenews.org.uk**

For all the latest news about the voluntary sector

### **Third Sector Interfaces**

#### **gov.scot/publications/third-sector-interfaces-contact-details**

Find your local voluntary sector umbrella bodies

### **Volunteer Scotland**

#### **volunteerscotland.net**

The national centre for volunteering

### **Youth Scotland**

#### **www.youthscotland.org.uk**

Network of youth groups in Scotland. Also run the Youth Achievement Awards

### **Young Scot**

#### **young.scot**

Information for young people, including info on youth forums, volunteering, and making a difference

### **Young Enterprise Scotland**

#### **yes.org.uk**

A range of enterprise programmes for young people in secondary education, and for those at university and college

### **YPI Scotland**

#### **ypiscotland.org.uk**

A structured curricular programme, designed for secondary schools, centred on youth voice, youth action and youth philanthropy