











# YouthVIP Summit

February 2022

## Introduction

Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland delivered the first YouthVIP Summit, an event that was co-designed and co-delivered with young volunteers of the Youth Volunteering Legacy Group. Hosting an annual youth volunteering summit is recommendation five out of the thirteen YouthVIP recommendations and the 2022 YouthVIP Summit has set a precedent for subsequent events.

The event brought together young people and organisations across Scotland to discuss the current trends and issues in youth volunteering. The main focus of discussions was effective practice of volunteering in local communities and barriers to inclusion that young people face when accessing and experiencing volunteering opportunities.

Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland supported engagement with young people to provide organisational representatives the opportunity to listen to young people's experiences of volunteering, why it was meaningful, the barriers they faced and the support they require in the future. Ensuring young people are at the core of the recommendations is the key objective of the YouthVIP project, and so it was imperative that this was a space where young people felt listened to.



## The outcomes of the YouthVIP Summit were to:

- Gather views and insights of a diverse group of young people and organisational representatives on youth engagement within the Scottish voluntary sector
- Create equitable space for debate and conversation between young people and organisational representatives in this space
- Develop ideas and recommendations for implementation of recommendations nine and ten
- Represent the views, experiences and ideas developed by the young people in a visually engaging output to ensure young people are considered as part of the ongoing decision-making processes around the YouthVIP recommendations
- Raise awareness and broaden knowledge of the YouthVIP project, its objectives and the recommendations

#### **Delivery method**

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions in place during the time of the event, there were adjustments made to the Young Scot operating model and working practices. To ensure that delivery of engagement through co-design continued with minimal disruption, providing young people and organisational representatives with opportunities to participate during this time, the session was delivered remotely using Zoom video conferencing and other digital communication tools, such as Menti, a digital questionnaire platform and Mural, an online collaborative whiteboard.

The delivery of the event and activities were led by the young people involved in the YouthVIP Legacy Group, who were supported by Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland staff.

The model for delivery meant that the attendees met virtually in a shared space as a full group but then completed each of the activities in small group "breakout spaces" led by Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland staff. Additional support measures were offered to all participants, in order to take part, ensuring that the model was inclusive and accessible. The young people in the YouthVIP Legacy Group led on the delivery of the summit as they each had designated sections of the event that they presented.



#### Overview of YouthVIP Summit

Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland delivered the first annual YouthVIP Summit for young people and organisational representatives to explore their experiences, views and vision around youth volunteering opportunities across Scotland. This included exploring meaningful experiences in local community volunteering; barriers to inclusion young people experience when volunteering; the current practices organisations have in place to support young volunteers and how these can be improved. The Summit took place on Thursday 3rd February from 12pm to 4pm.

This event was led by the young people in the YouthVIP project, as they led the delivery of the event and supported staff in the facilitation of breakout group activities. The young people had been provided with accompanying notes to support them in their delivery and had attended a practice run-through session prior to the event.

The event was also an opportunity for the young people to meet the organisational representatives and hear first-hand about the opportunities and challenges in accessing and experiencing volunteering opportunities in Scotland.

The summit had a balance of presentations and interactive activities. There were four presentations from: the YouthVIP group about the project and recommendations; a Q+A with young volunteers on their volunteering experiences; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Local Government and Housing, Shona Robison MSP about the Formal Volunteering Framework; and Debbie Maltman, Research Officer at Volunteer Scotland on current trends within youth volunteering and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Activities that attendees were encouraged to participate in were an object scavenger hunt icebreaker and a chat waterfall energizer. The attendees were also split into breakout groups to participate in two activities: a Mural activity that focused on recommendation 10: campaigns to promote volunteering in local communities; and recommendation 9: framework for young people who face greater barriers to inclusion. The insights taken from these activities will help shape how the YouthVIP Legacy Group implement these recommendations.



#### **Demographics**

The YouthVIP Summit had a registration capacity of 150 attendees which was achieved. Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland recruited young people and organisational representatives by sharing the event through our regional and national networks, our social media channels and via the Get Involved section of young.scot.

Out of the 150 people who signed up, 86 attended: 57 organisational representatives and 29 young people (including the four young people on the Q+A Youth Panel). Eleven young people of the YouthVIP Legacy Group also attended but are not included in the overall attendance statistic.

Out of the 57 organisational representatives, 34 worked in both a role and organisation that involves young volunteers; 17 worked in an organisation that involves young volunteers; and 2 did not currently work in a role or organisation that involves young volunteers. The young people were asked some optional equality and diversity questions in their registration form. Out of the 29 young people, 19 are current volunteers; 1 had previously volunteered; and 5 had never volunteered. The young people ranged from 13 to 26 years, with 18 identifying as female and 6 identified as male. 1 young person attending had additional support needs that involves challenges to learning and understanding. 8 young people shared their postcodes from locations identified as being in the SIMD lower 1-2 quintiles.



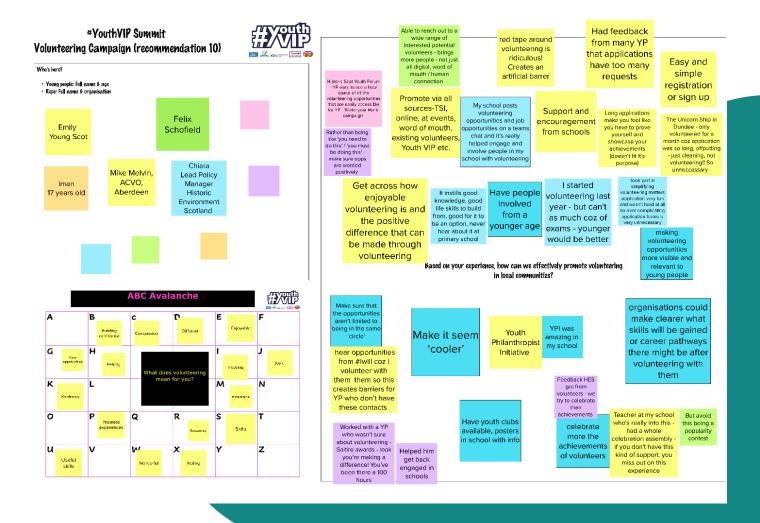
## **Group Activities**

#### Activity 1:

**Recommendation 10 Mural Board** 

The first activity focused on recommendation 10: campaigns to promote volunteering in local communities. The attendees were split into fourteen breakout rooms and completed two activities on the Mural board: an ABC Avalanche to answer what volunteering means to them and a whiteboard activity to consider ideas around the following question: Based on your experience, how can we effectively promote volunteering in local communities?

The insights from these activities will support the YouthVIP Legacy Group in shaping how they begin to implement the recommendation. Twelve common themes were identified on how volunteering could be effectively promoted in local communities:



- Opportunities for under 16s.
- A national online hub or space where volunteering opportunities are advertised, providing young people with easy access to opportunities.
- Visual aids in the promotion of volunteering opportunities, such as photographs or videos of volunteers and real experiences.
- Promote volunteering opportunities using all sources including social media, Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) connections and word of mouth. This will ensure that opportunities are not just limited to an 'inner circle'.
- More publicity around the celebration of achievements and sharing success stories through celebrating volunteer journeys and outcomes. It is important, however, to avoid this becoming a popularity contest.
- More collaboration through schools and opportunities shared through Personal and Social Education curriculum and work experience. If schools were better connected with TSIs, it would raise awareness of different opportunities for young people.

- Positive language around volunteering and avoid phrases such as 'you need to or must do this'. Language should focus on skills development and feelings of self-reward.
  - Peer support, such as through a buddy system will provide support to younger volunteers and will create more of a diverse group.
- Information and drop-in sessions.

  This will support young people who are unsure of volunteering and provide better access to information about the volunteering opportunity and role.
- Measuring skills and progression through regular check-ins, pre and post volunteering placement surveys and personal development reviews.
- A Share case studies of real volunteering experiences, such as meaningful community experience or what other organisations are doing.
- Collaborative working between organisations and TSIs, as well as stronger connections between young people and their local TSI.

"Progression through volunteering is a powerful statement"

(YouthVIP Summit attendee)

"Organisations working together rather than reaching out separately"

(YouthVIP Summit attendee)

"Schools collaborate with organisations to help shape the way young people feel towards those organisations"

(YouthVIP Summit attendee)

## Activity 2: Recommendation 9

For the second activity, the attendees explored recommendation 9: framework for young people who face greater barriers to inclusion. This was a discussion activity, and the attendees split back into their breakout groups to discuss different types of barriers to inclusion and what could be done by organisations to provide support. The attendees were given prompt questions to facilitate discussions:

#### Prompts for young people attending:

Have you experienced any barriers when volunteering or accessing volunteering opportunities?

Was any support provided by the voluntary organisation to overcome any barriers?

What could organisations do that would be beneficial for you when volunteering or looking to volunteer with them?

### Prompts for organisational representatives attending:

What practices do you do to support young volunteers overcome any barriers?

How could these practices be better?

What would support your organisation in becoming even more inclusive for young volunteers?

Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland staff captured discussions using Google Jamboard. Twelve common barriers were identified, and suggestions were provided by participants in what practices could support young people experiencing these barriers.

Lack of opportunities for under 16s	Applications process
The COVID-19 pandemic	Lack of confidence
Digital access	Accessing volunteering opportunities in general
Language	Competing priorities
Stigma around volunteering	Additional support needs
Lack of opportunities in more rural areas	Accessing transport

Many young people at the event shared that they had difficulty accessing volunteering opportunities because of their age, as most opportunities are aimed at 14 to 25, and therefore they could not volunteer anywhere locally. One group acknowledged that age is a significant barrier which has been existent for years unfortunately. They felt that there needs to be more under 16s representation in youth volunteering, and that there should only be restrictions for legal reasons, such as a requirement for driving. Many organisations agreed that there appears to be a myth around providing opportunities for under 16s in terms of insurance; one group felt that there should be more education of staff around safeguarding so organisations feel more confident to support younger volunteers.

Some of the attendees expressed that the **COVID-19 pandemic** is a barrier as it has resulted in a lack of in person opportunities. This has led to volunteering moving online, thus creating an additional barrier if young people do not have the **digital** means to engage. One group highlighted that some local authorities do provide technological equipment but acknowledged that this can take time. Another experience was shared regarding the Princes Trust who offer a development award to grant volunteers digital devices, which is open to applications from all volunteers.

One group felt that **language** can be a barrier to young people accessing volunteering opportunities whose first language is not English. For example, some language used around volunteering is not suitable for young people, such as using organisational terminology or language that is too technical. One group highlighted the value of engaging with community ESOL groups with interpreters or bilingual volunteers who could support facilitation.

Some of the young people attending felt that there can be a **stigma** around volunteering which can be somewhat embarrassing. They shared, for example, that there is a stereotype that you are uncool, or rather posh, if you volunteer.

Some attendees highlighted the lack of opportunities in **rural areas** as a barrier. An organisational representative gave the example that they are based in a very rural area where there is no bus route and can only be accessed by car. These attendees felt that there needs to be a recognition that transport in rural areas is lacking and the impact this has on young people living in these areas.

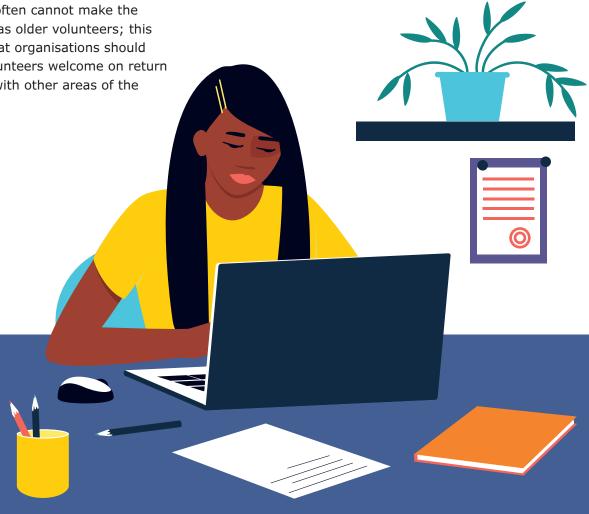
Similarly, accessing transport was emphasised as a key barrier for some young people, both in rural and urban areas. Many young people have to take public transport to participate in volunteering experiences, a task which can make many young people feel anxious. Public transport can also be expensive, so organisations covering expenses is essential.

Many attendees felt that additional support needs were a clear barrier for some young people, as some organisations do not have the resources, staff training or capacity to adapt to meet these needs. The attendees felt that this is a barrier that needs to be addressed and appropriate support must be identified. Staff should not be afraid to have open conversations with young people who have additional support needs, asking what adaptions they require in order to partake in opportunities meaningfully.



A major barrier that was identified was young people's other commitments. Some young people attending highlighted that life can become busy due to exams and other commitments, and some young people volunteering can therefore feel guilty for taking a step back. School, college and university can create a barrier, especially if the young person becomes easily overwhelmed. Some young people also gave examples of family commitments, such as caring for siblings or young parents. Other young people emphasised that it can sometimes feel like volunteering versus school; there is a balance between studying and volunteering, but sometimes when young people are experiencing a heavy workload, they have to give volunteering a miss. This can result in young people feeling guilty for not showing up. Some suggestions were made as to how to better support this barrier. One group expressed that flexibility is key in terms of the time commitment, the location of the opportunity and flexibility around the role and responsibilities too. Another group shared that voluntary organisations need to understand that young people often cannot make the same commitment as older volunteers; this group suggested that organisations should keep the young volunteers welcome on return and connect them with other areas of the organisation.

Another significant barrier that was raised was the application process that some organisations request as part of their volunteer recruitment. Some attendees questioned whether there was a need for application forms for volunteering, as they can be lengthy and may feature difficult questions to answer. Another group gave the example that if a young person has dyslexia, these applications can be intimidating and off-putting. One group suggested that organisations should remove applications and instead, allow young people to provide contact details. After the young person has expressed an interest in volunteering, the organisations could carry out 'recruitment conversations' as a way to provide more support to young people who are considering volunteering.



**Lack of confidence** to engage was highlighted by some young people attending the summit as a barrier to volunteering. This could be because the young person has never volunteered before, because they are quite shy, or for other reasons. Several suggestions were made as to how this barrier could be supported. Some groups felt that peer support through a 'buddy system' could support young volunteers' confidence and gave the example of youth sports club where this works well. It was also suggested that it would be beneficial to have a parent, friend or guardian who could attend the first session with the young person to support them, although it was acknowledged that this may not always be possible due to capacity issues. Other groups highlighted the importance of providing clear guidance to new volunteers through a handbook or induction process as it would make the young volunteers aware of which designated staff member they could go to if they had any issues. If the volunteering opportunity is in person, it is also beneficial to provide a visual aid of the location, so the young person is more familiar, especially if they are travelling alone. It would also be useful for young people to meet the 'face behind the email' before they begin their volunteering experience, something that could be achieved with one-to-one Zoom introductions. Finally, an anti-discrimination approach should be made clear during the induction process, to ensure all young volunteers feel safe.

Many groups felt that accessing volunteering opportunities in general can be a major barrier in itself. Many young people do not have knowledge of volunteering opportunities and so therefore can be difficult to access. Some young people highlighted that they were made aware of opportunities through word of mouth, or from organisations they already volunteer with, and so is inaccessible for young nonvolunteers. Some attendees felt that having information sessions, workshops or open days where volunteers could share their experiences could help raise awareness of various volunteering opportunities.

There were other suggestions that attendees raised to support organisations in being more inclusive and accessible to young volunteers. One group shared that organisations can sometimes take too long in responding to young people who have enquired which is bad practice and off-putting. Having a designated staff member who overlooks communication with volunteers can resolve this.

Another idea suggested was to have a type of audit, pledge or charter that voluntary organisations can hold after demonstrating that they support inclusive volunteering for young people.



Utilising connections with Third Sector Interface (TSI) organisations, sharing knowledge and expertise to support the creation of volunteering opportunities was another point raised about how to widen outreach to young people. Using word of mouth through partnerships with TSIs will allow organisations to recruit a diversity of young people.

Finally, several groups shared that it is not enough for organisations to simply provide opportunities for young people; they need to also involve young people at the beginning of the project design, to ensure it is something that young people want to partake in.

Organisations would benefit from co-designing opportunities with young people.



## Feedback

#### YouthVIP Summit attendees

At the conclusion of the event the attendees participated in a Menti evaluation quiz. The attendees had the opportunity to tell us more about their experience of the YouthVIP Summit; what could have been improved; what they would like to see happen next from what was shared today; and what they want to see included in future summits.

The attendees were asked to rate the YouthVIP Summit on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all and 5 being 100% yes.

- When asked if they enjoyed the summit, the average score received was 4.5 out of 5.
- When asked if they learned more about the YouthVIP project, the average score was 4.4 out of 5.
- ✓ When asked if they felt more inspired by the voluntary sector in Scotland, the average score was 4.7 out of 5.
- When asked if it was easy to find out about the event, the average score was 4.4 out of 5.
- Finally, when asked if they received all the information they needed in advance, the average score was 4.7 out

The attendees stated a variety of things they enjoyed about attending the YouthVIP Summit. Common feedback was praising the event for being youth-led, involving many young people. Many attendees enjoyed listening to the experiences of young people and that "the YouthVIP group running the summit was very refreshing". Another attendee stated that "it was really inspiring to hear from the young people themselves, I loved how they were properly involved in the event". Another

attendee praised the YouthVIP volunteers for leading the event, as they were "in awe of their courage to speak today", whilst another expressed that "the young people are an absolute credit to themselves".

Many attendees found the summit inspiring and informative. One attendee stated that hearing the experiences from the Q+A Youth Panel were "superbly insightful" and they have taken away a lot of learning about involving young people in the future in their organisation. Another attendee expressed that "some really valuable conversations took place" and enjoyed "sharing insights with others". Other attendees enjoyed learning more about the YouthVIP project and recommendations; "a superb YouthVIP Summit. Highlighted the important and tremendous contribution young people are making volunteering, helped develop this even further and take forward the YouthVIP recommendations".

Finally, another major praise of the summit was that it was a "brilliant networking opportunity" for attendees to connect and network with other organisations. One attendee commented that they really enjoyed being "able to have an honest conversation about breaking barriers with other organisations". Another participant stated that they "really enjoyed the breakout rooms and hearing from other organisations, sharing experiences", whilst another saw the breakout activities as "great brainstorming time with other representatives and young people".

When asked if there was anything that could be improved about the event, the main feedback shared was that an in-person event would be more enjoyable and that they hope this will be the format of the next summit. Some other attendees expressed that whilst they enjoyed the event, it was perhaps a little long and a break for lunch would have been appreciated. Another suggested that the presentations from the guest speakers could have been shortened. Other attendees shared suggestions for improved networking opportunities; for example, one attendee commented that sharing an attendee list with contact details would be useful to follow up discussions after the event. Finally, an attendee suggested that more promotion of the summit targeting young people would be beneficial, as it felt like there was an imbalance of organisational representatives to young people.

When asked what they would like to see happen from what was shared at the summit, many attendees stated that they would like to see "more opportunities to discuss how to embed youth volunteering into society". Many attendees shared that they would like to attend an inperson YouthVIP Summit next year, whilst one expressed that a follow up networking event for specific regions would be useful. Another attendee commented that they would like to see more resources and training available to organisations on involving young people in volunteering. Finally, many attendees expressed that they would like to see organisations act on their pledges, resulting in "more opportunity for young people to have their say and work with organisations to make the volunteering process and journey more young person friendly".

When asked what they would like to see included in future summits, some attendees shared that they would like to see some case studies and examples of volunteering good practice in organisations. Another attendee expressed that they would enjoy a training session on working with young volunteers with additional support needs as they would like to feel more equipped in this area. Other feedback was "more Scottish Government representation to see what the government are doing to support YouthVIP". Finally, the attendees want to see more inclusion of volunteering examples in different contexts and settings, as well as "continued opportunities to hear young people's experiences".



# Feedback from the YouthVIP Legacy Group

In the following YouthVIP session after the summit, the young people who led the event got the chance to share how they found the experience, also through a Menti evaluation quiz. Out of the 11 young people who attended and led the summit, 8 participated in the evaluation.

The attendees were asked to rate the YouthVIP Summit on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all and 10 being 100% yes.

- When asked how prepared they felt for leading the YouthVIP Summit, the average score was 9.5 out of 10.
- When asked if they received all the information they needed in advance, the average score was 9.8 out of 10.

When asked how they found the YouthVIP Summit overall, the young people shared that they found it productive, interesting and insightful.

"I found it really fun and I also really liked hearing everyone else's thoughts and views too".

"My group were able to touch on different aspects of volunteering and I was able to learn a lot from it".

## "Loved everyone's energy and dedication to the work".

When asked how they found leading and presenting at the YouthVIP Summit, the majority of the young people found it "a daunting yet equally fulfilling experience", and that the experience strengthened their confidence and public speaking skills.

When asked what could have improved their experience of leading the YouthVIP Summit, most of the young people shared that nothing could have improved their experience. One young person expressed that there could have been more engagement by having questions prepared to boost attendees or encourage them to speak out as there were some silences that were quite hard to fill.

When asked if they would do it again, all of the young people stated that they would present and lead at the YouthVIP Summit again.





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