

Scottish Volunteering Forum: Coronavirus Survey Responses

We received 23 responses to the survey from a range of organisations as detailed in the table below. These respondents represent nearly 30,000 volunteers.

How would you describe your organisation?

[More Details](#)

● A UK-wide organisation	4
● A Scotland-wide organisation	7
● An organisation which operat...	5
● An organisation which operat...	7
● An organisation which operat...	0

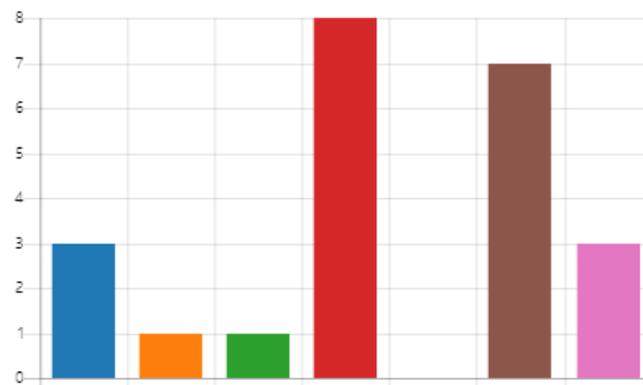


The first question asked about the impact of coronavirus on engagement of volunteers, detailed in the table below. 78% of respondents have seen no change or a significant decrease in the number of volunteers they are currently able to engage.

What has been the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the number of volunteers you engage?

[More Details](#)

● Major increase	3
● Significant increase	1
● Slight increase	1
● No change	8
● Slight decrease	0
● Significant decrease	7
● Major decrease	3



When asked the reasons for this, 4 respondents reported logistical challenges of volunteers being able to volunteer from home, and 4 highlighted volunteer health and wellbeing as the reason for putting volunteering on hold. 3 reported a need to close services which involve volunteers to focus on the coronavirus response.

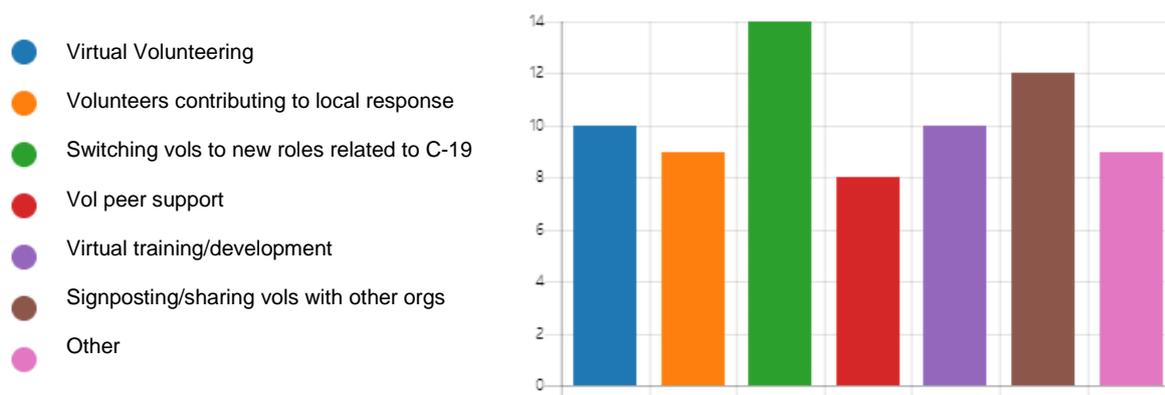
When asked how they have adapted volunteer recruitment processes, if relevant, respondents reported the following:

- Interviews/chats using phone or videoconferencing
- Training delivered remotely using videoconferencing

- Removing requirement for references
- Utilising new 'fast-track' PVG application processes
- Centralising recruitment to one office

When asked why respondents might have stopped recruitment, the main reason for this was that there is no way to involve volunteers currently and that efforts are focussing on retaining existing volunteers.

We next asked respondents what they have done in recent weeks to maintain volunteer engagement and the results can be seen below:



Several respondents also gave more detail on this:

- All of our volunteer led services have moved to telephone and virtual support. This has required a lot of testing and guidance developed especially for the virtual platforms.
- We have also tried to buddy up volunteers with each other so that those who are shielding can have someone to talk to
- For those volunteers who wanted to do more, we have signposted them to TSI's and the Ready Scotland website to apply for the roles there.
- Blether buddies has been particularly of interest. This means volunteers who fall into the at risk category can still take part without leaving home
- Staff are also calling, emailing and producing newsletters for volunteers to keep them engaged during COVID- 19.
- There is no issue with families having to social distance so this brought home how family volunteers can help.

When asked what measures they have introduced to support the health and wellbeing of volunteers, respondents reported the following:

- Standing down all face to face or public facing volunteering
- Adhering to government guidance

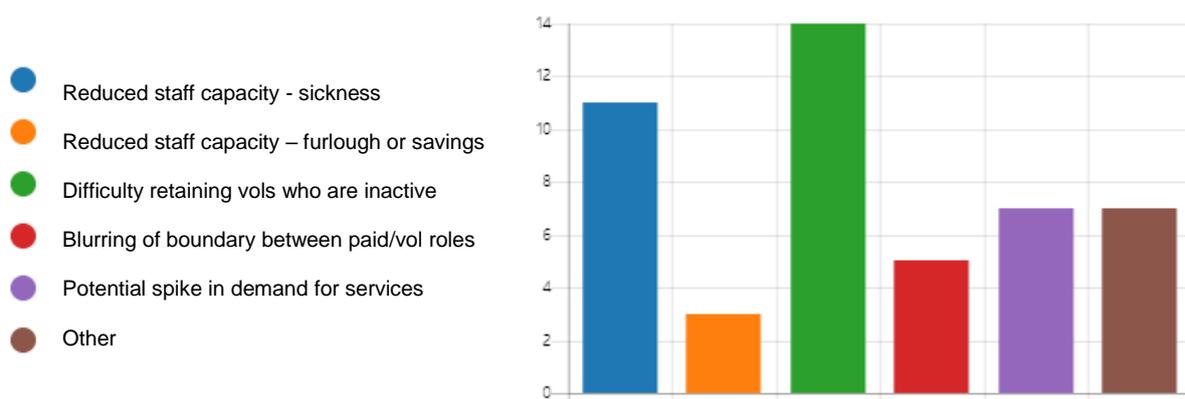
- Sharing resources and techniques to improve their health and wellbeing
- Regular and personalised contact with volunteers
- Additional support to volunteers who are socially isolated or vulnerable
- Virtual get-togethers with volunteers, social support and fun activities
- Providing PPE where required
- Dedicated line managers for all volunteers

When asked what measures respondents are taking to support their own health and wellbeing, the following responses were given:

- Regular calls with team, including social catch ups
- Regular calls with peers – other volunteer managers
- Relaxation classes
- Taking regular breaks
- Wellness Action Plans
- Gin!

We then asked about plans for Volunteers' Week this year. At the time of this survey closing in mid-April, more than half of respondents had no definite plans yet. The remainder we either looking at virtual celebrations or postponing events to later in the year.

We asked respondents about any specific concerns they had for the coming months. These can be seen in the table below:



The 'Other' responses detailed above include services being underused, individuals managing volunteers who are not adequately prepared to do so, impact on morale and reputational damage to volunteering as a result of the lack of opportunities to meet demand.

When asked if they had identified any measures to help mitigate some of these concerns, respondents shared the following:

- More regular contact with volunteers
- Reaching out to other organisations for ideas
- Being flexible about team remits
- Addressing confusion about volunteering and voluntary redeployment
- A Volunteer Service Manager Charter – clear guidelines on managing volunteer managers
- Developing a risk register
- Exploring methods for virtual engagement

We asked respondents if they had identified new approaches that would last beyond social distancing. These are some of the responses:

- Befriending by phone
- Delivering training remotely including webinars
- Virtual volunteer interviews
- Digital PVG applications
- Removing need for references
- Quicker recruitment processes

Finally, we asked for respondents thoughts on the way that the considerable interest in volunteering has been coordinated/mobilised so far. Here are some responses:

- it would be helpful if there was just one place for people to go to search for volunteering opportunities.
- I feel the response for NHS volunteers in Scotland has been slower than England. RVS and the new app has enabled volunteers to start quickly in England. Personally, I applied for the community response role weeks ago and have had one email so a very different response rate so I can understand if volunteers have applied and feel frustrated and are eager to get started but can't.
- Some of the national call for volunteers was actually a call for ex members of staff to return and be paid, which is a bit misleading for some.
- I have noticed an understandable confusion around the differences between Scotland and rUK's approach, and the national press not being clear on what was on offer.
- In a word frustration. Scotland Cares was launched before structures in place and needs identified. I am coordinating the volunteers who registered via the Volunteer Scotland link for Glasgow, approx 3,800 so far excluding British Red Cross - but don't

know how many signed up for both. There are very few meaningful and safe opportunities we can signpost volunteers to.

- On the whole from what I have been hearing it has worked extremely well and people are being helped that might have otherwise fallen through the net. Local and national radio shows have also helped to signpost people to organisations that need help and helped people who were on their own. I think as there was no initial co-ordinated approach what happened was better than no one doing anything and waiting on someone else acting.
- I initially looked at Covid Mutual Aid Facebook groups when they first started and joined one, but it quickly became unmanageable with the amount of members, or people saying they would help but requests going unanswered. I left it and focused on my neighbours, colleagues, friends and family
- Local TSIs are now expected to pick up the pieces of volunteering and minimise the damage done by an ill thought out, entirely politically motivated, badly executed national campaign. Long term I believe it will have a very negative impact on volunteering.
- Should have been demand led rather than supply led.