



HANOVER SCOTLAND

# VOLUNTEERING SERVICE PLAN

2024 – 2027

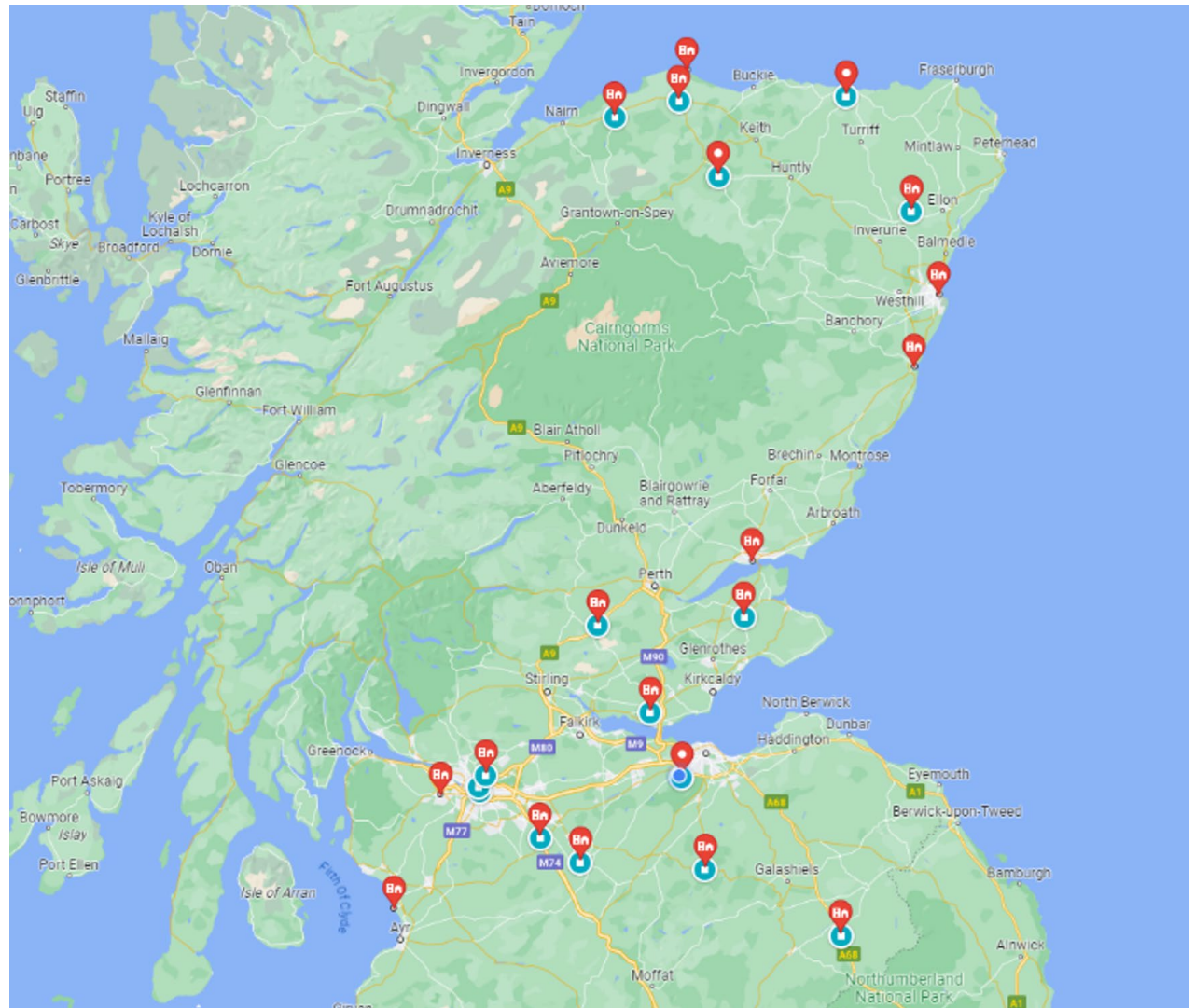
# Purpose and background

Hanover's Volunteering Service was established several years ago to reduce social isolation and loneliness by matching befrienders with customers.

The mutually beneficial service plays an important role in supplementing the work of our employees through providing additional support to customers. Volunteers may choose to give their time to Hanover and our customers for various reasons such as: being a good citizen; helping others; or learning new skills. Hanover customers can also volunteer their time; for example, by evaluating our decision-making processes.

There are close links between the Customer Engagement and Volunteering functions in Hanover. Volunteers are recruited and managed by our Volunteer Co-Ordinator, who, alongside Development Managers, maps the volunteer journey.

Currently, approximately 50 active Hanover volunteers, from Moray to the Borders, provide 1:1 befriending, support social activities on developments and help with digital literacy and IT skills.



Map Data © 2024 Google

## Volunteers

The purpose of this plan is to increase the number of volunteers choosing to spend their time with us.

Research shows that volunteering increased across Scotland during the COVID-19 pandemic (Volunteer Scotland, 2020). This was due to a rise in informal supports and mutual aid (for example, picking up shopping for someone who was shielding) rather than volunteering with an established organisation like Hanover. Since the pandemic, our pool of volunteers has reduced. Volunteer recruitment was on hold during the pandemic and many previous volunteers have not returned. A key aim of the plan is to increase the number of volunteers choosing to spend their time with us.

## Happy Customer Strategy

Our Volunteering Service plays an important role in delivering the Happy Customer Strategy; by supporting customers to be happy with the services they receive, providing options to promote independent living, and enhancing their lives. The Volunteering Service is responsible for taking the lead on recruiting volunteers and providing volunteering activities. In partnership with local teams, they will then match volunteers with individuals and/or developments. Volunteers enable our customers to 'get out and about', provide a listening ear and a friendly face. Ultimately providing a service that reduces social isolation and loneliness. The relationships built are key to the success of the service. Customers say that their volunteers are "lovely", "friendly" and "care", which makes a difference to those who do not have friends or family locally.

Growing our pool of volunteers and expanding partnership working will actively contribute to Hanover's strategic goal of 'Happy Customers.'

## Volunteer Demographics

Statistically volunteers are predominantly:

- Female
- From higher socio-economic groups
- Able-bodied
- Live in affluent areas

Hanover's current pool of volunteers reflects these demographics. Research shows that men are more likely to volunteer their time with activities such as sport than befriending and similar 1:1 voluntary activities. While we have far more female than male volunteers, the introduction of 'Paths for All' and 'Sporting Memories' as voluntary opportunities may help to encourage men (both external to Hanover, as well as our customers) to participate.

We have developments in areas of higher deprivation, making it difficult to source volunteers. Widening the scope of our recruitment (currently predominantly through unpaid recruitment websites and Third Sector Interfaces) through local adverts may help encourage uptake. The creation of opportunities for our customers to be a volunteer, through leading a walk for example, or evaluating our policies, will ensure that the volunteering service is available to all developments.

Two-thirds of our customers live alone. So, the communal lounge and opportunities to meet with their neighbours and others can be important for their mental wellbeing. Volunteers in the development enhance the social capital of those customers by developing links with their local community.

Loneliness and social isolation are key issues affecting older people, with potential effects on physical and mental health. Our customers are clear that reducing loneliness is a key priority. As is feeling safe and secure. Hanover's Volunteering Service contributes to our customers' peace of mind through:

- Increasing our customers' access to relationships and social activities
- Contributing to the ability of our customers to live well at home for longer
- Helping them to be happy with their lives, and the services they receive
- Reducing anxiety and worry about meeting new people

Hanover employees note that "the befriending service has given [customers] a new direction in life." With customers commenting that "I would recommend having a volunteer befriender as I have "a pal for life." And "I get out less and less... so I look forward to the volunteer's visits."

# Consultation and Engagement

We conducted a Consultation and Engagement exercise.

Development Managers were consulted through in-person meetings (1 per region) and a questionnaire asking what they want from the service, with the aim of exploring the key employee link between the Service, volunteers and the customer.

20% of active volunteers commented on the Volunteering Service Plan, by telephone, email and in person. Respondents were able to provide specific feedback to Hanover employees through open discussion and semi-structured questions. Volunteers and Hanover customers were in favour of increasing the reach of volunteering and noted the benefits of the service to both parties. Many volunteers were keen to help promote the service, with some pointing out they do so already.

# Three-Year Plan

It is important to note that while we can further enhance and develop how we recruit, train, manage and evaluate volunteers, this should not become overly formal or onerous on the volunteer. Volunteering is not employment. It is a choice and should be fun. Research suggests that too prescriptive an approach dissuades potential volunteers, and this was echoed in our consultation with volunteers. For example, one individual said that “[other organisations] tend to be very prescriptive, particularly around the number of hours you need to volunteer per week. Hanover was unique in letting the volunteer and customer determine what suited them.”

Removing potential barriers is key to the success of the Service. For example, paperwork and other administrative tasks should remain at a minimum. Research shows that comprehensive training is an incentive to recruitment. A volunteer noted that while training might put some people off, it might encourage others to ‘have a go’. Commenting that their friends had thought about volunteering, but felt they needed training beforehand to feel more confident.

There is reluctance in some developments to engage with the Volunteering Service, or to be responsible for organising social activities. This was highlighted in the consultation by a volunteer who spends time in more than one development. Noting that that

the difference was like ‘chalk and cheese – the residents are the ones who lose out’. This presents a challenge, as while there may be an appetite for reducing loneliness it requires a greater level of input to develop and maintain than can be managed without buy-in from all stakeholders. The plan seeks to improve on this by increasing the number of contacts between developments and the Volunteering Service and embedding regular communications about volunteering to all Hanover customers and employees.

## Our objectives and key milestones

### The key objectives for the Volunteering Service:

- The service will be embedded in developments’ everyday practice and celebrated across Hanover. Measured through the pool of volunteers increasing by 50% each year.
- Develop new partnerships and collaborations to support customer wellbeing and improve access to additional support. Measured through a wide range of opportunities being available to customers.
- There will be robust processes and systems in place.

**In Year One**, the service, in partnership with Customer Engagement, will recognise the baseline of current activities in developments. We will implement and embed a volunteer management system. Current processes will also be reviewed. This will ensure that our marketing and recruitment is tailored to the target audience. After a consultation process, the service will be rebranded and relaunched (in partnership with Communications and Customer Engagement) to drive enthusiasm and buy-in to the service.

**Year Two** will focus on developing strategic partnerships and seeking corporate collaborations and sponsorship. These will provide additional value to the service and our customers, through an expansion of the opportunities available. Corporate partners will provide opportunities for their employees to volunteer with Hanover. A pulse survey undertaken in year two will enable us to identify progress and demonstrate impact and value internally and to potential collaborators.

**By Year Three** of the plan, our Volunteering Service will have robust systems and mechanisms in place that allow us to quantify the benefits of the service. Customers will be able to choose from a wide range of opportunities. The Service will be well known and celebrated.

# Principles and Outcomes

The Scottish Government's (2019) 'Volunteering for All: National Framework' sets out the principles for volunteering services. Our volunteering opportunities are meaningful and diverse. Volunteers and customers decide together how, where and when they will spend time together, meaning that the volunteering opportunities are responsive and flexible. Customers and volunteers benefit from the relationships they build. Spending time together has a positive impact on their wellbeing.

We will promote and market the volunteering programme through our existing partnerships and communication channels. This will also provide an opportunity to connect with our existing volunteers, ensuring that they feel valued and recognised. We will continue to develop our Induction Process and training opportunities so that volunteers are supported and enabled.



Fig. 1: 'The Framework' (Scottish Government, 2018)

# Resources

Volunteers are the key resource for the service.

Providing attractive volunteering opportunities is fundamental to ensure we continue to increase the pool of volunteers.

The Volunteer Coordinator currently manages the pool of volunteers, from recruitment to supervision. If our current number of volunteers were employed by Hanover, as Customer Support, for 2 hours per week; based on the current Scottish Living Wage, this would equate to approximately £180,000 over the three years of this plan – demonstrating a significant benefit to our customers from the service.

The service seeks to make better use of travelling time and online meetings with volunteers. However, there is a small budget in place for travel and subsistence costs, which will remain the same over the first year of the plan. There is potential further staffing resource through collaborative working with the Customer Engagement team to ensure both services optimise time and resources. Each taking a combined role in engagement and volunteering. A volunteering management software solution will be sourced and used to modernise and streamline the system currently in use, allowing the Volunteer Coordinator to report easily on the service and better manage volunteers.

# Risk Management

In terms of managing any risk associated with the delivery of this plan, the table below captures the key risks and their mitigation. We will assess these annually as part of our review of the action plan and budget requirements.

Risk	Mitigation
<b>Number of volunteers – too low to meet plan’s ambitions</b>	There are a wide range of volunteering opportunities available, which will attract a range of people. Collaborating with external agencies to ensure that recruitment is dynamic and attractive.
<b>Lack of employee buy-in</b>	Marketing and publicity in partnership with the Communications team to promote the service. Ensuring that success is celebrated to ensure all employees are aware of the benefits of the service.
<b>Geographic spread of developments</b>	A review of the team structure to ensure it best meets the service’s needs. Collaboration with Customer Engagement to ensure best use of resource, and provide support where required.

# Monitoring and Performance

We will undertake transactional surveys for both volunteers and customers, to ensure that volunteering opportunities meet their needs and preferences, and so we have robust evidence about the success and impact of the service.

A Key Performance Indicator - the number of active volunteers (CX3) – has been set and will be reported on bi-monthly to the Operational Management Team.



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