

Supported Volunteering Programme 2026

A collaborative approach to strengthening employability pathways across South Lanarkshire



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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OPERATIONAL LEAD



The Supported Volunteering Programme highlights the vital role of the third sector in strengthening statutory employability services across South Lanarkshire.

Delivered by VASLan in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council and the Local Employability Partnership, the programme offers a flexible, person-centred pathway for individuals facing complex barriers to employment. Embedding supported volunteering within the wider employability system, provides effective early intervention that supports progression toward work.

In collaboration with third sector organisations, the programme delivers high-quality placements that build confidence, improve wellbeing, and develop key employability skills. Host organisations receive £55 per day per volunteer, enabling them to provide dedicated mentoring and structured support, ensuring positive outcomes for participants while enhancing community capacity.

The programme acts as a critical bridge between disengagement and employment, reducing pressure on statutory services through preventative, community-based support. This approach improves system efficiency while delivering measurable benefits for individuals and local organisations.

Sustained investment will be essential to maintain and scale this model, which demonstrates the strategic value of the third sector in delivering inclusive, effective employability outcomes.

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HOW THE PROGRAMME WORKS



Host Organisations

Staff at VASLan and Secondees work with third sector organisations to ensure that host organisations have their correct policies, good volunteer management, the capacity to support a volunteer & receive £55 per volunteer, per day.

Referral and Engagement

People are referred through programmes at South Lanarkshire council and Routes to Work South, such as Aspire, Supported Employment, Gateway and Supporting Families. This helps identify those who need a gentle first step before formal support.

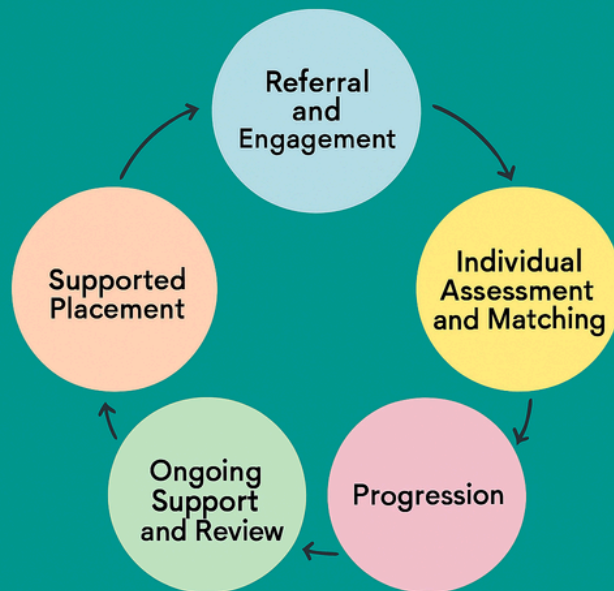
Individual Assessment and Matching

Each person takes part in a friendly assessment with VASLan to explore their needs, interests and goals. They are then matched with a volunteering role that feels suitable, accessible, flexible and meaningful.

Supported Placement

Participants begin their placement in a host organisation that provides a safe and welcoming setting. Via the £55 that organisations receive, mentors offer steady guidance, regular supervision and space to build confidence.

HOW THE PROGRAMME WORKS



Ongoing Support and Review

Support continues throughout the placement. Regular check-ins help track progress, solve challenges early and make sure the role stays helpful and positive.

Progression

As confidence and routine grow, participants are supported to move forward to further volunteering, learning opportunities, employability programmes or work.

Key Features

- Focused on the individual
- Host organisations receive £55 per volunteer, per day
 - Fits within the wider employability pathway
- Delivered with strong third sector & statutory partners
 - Built on partnership working

Programme Reach & Engagement

101 Participants
Supported over 6
months

53 Participants
Successfully Placed

28 awaiting
placement

£40,515 distributed
to the third sector to
support dedicated
mentoring to
strengthen
volunteering and
participant skills

What This Tells us

The programme is reaching individuals who require a flexible, supportive entry point into employability.

- Strong uptake reflects clear demand for early-stage support
- Active placements demonstrate successful matching and engagement
- Third Sector organisations receiving £55 per volunteer, per day is crucial in enabling groups to provide dedicated mentoring opportunities.

Partnership Engagement
Stronger System Working

- South Lanarkshire Council and Routes to Work South key workers engaged through programme activity
- Increased confidence in referring into supported volunteering
- More joined-up working across services
- Better alignment between third sector and statutory support

Why This Matters

The programme is not only supporting individuals, but strengthening how services work together.

- Creates a clear entry point into the employability system
- Supports statutory services to engage individuals earlier
- Enables the third sector to play a more active delivery role
- Improves overall flow through the employability pipeline

Growing demand and strong engagement highlight the importance of supported volunteering as a key part of the employability pathway

Partnership in Practice: South Lanarkshire Council & Routes to Work South

A key strength of the Supported Volunteering programme is the continued support available to participants beyond their placement. This is made possible through strong partnership working with South Lanarkshire Council and Routes to Work South, ensuring individuals are not only supported into volunteering, they are supported throughout their journey and also guided towards their next steps.

Through these partnerships, participants benefit from a seamless transition into further support tailored to their individual goals. Dedicated staff from South Lanarkshire Council and Routes to Work South work closely with individuals as they complete their placements, helping to build on the skills, confidence, and routine developed during the programme.

This ongoing support includes:

- Access to employability services and job search support
- Guidance on further education, training, and qualifications
- Continued one-to-one support to sustain confidence and motivation
- Help identifying suitable progression opportunities aligned with individual aspirations

This joined-up approach creates a clear pathway from engagement → confidence-building → skills development → progression, helping individuals move closer to employment, education, or other positive destinations.

By working collaboratively, partners are able to provide consistent, person-centred support that meets people where they are and supports them to move forward at a pace that is right for them.

Impact on Participants

Building confidence, wellbeing, and readiness for the future

Participants are not only gaining experience but building the confidence, skills, and resilience needed to take meaningful steps toward employment and further opportunities. The following statements have been reported by host organisations and participants.

Confidence & Self-Esteem

Participants grow in confidence through structured, supported activity and positive experiences.

Wellbeing & Mental Health

Regular engagement and social interaction contribute to improved wellbeing and reduced isolation.

Routine & Reliability

Volunteering helps individuals develop structure, time management, and consistency.

Skills Development

Participants gain transferable skills including communication, teamwork, and workplace awareness.

"Volunteering at Swaddle has really helped me build my confidence. Me and my family have noticed a big difference in how I communicate with others. It has given me valuable work experience and made me feel more confident about applying for jobs. I've really enjoyed my time here and the team have been so supportive in helping me become more confident."

"This has been a fantastic opportunity... I have learned so much. It has been great for my mental health."

Testimonial

R:EVOLVE
RECYCLE

Case Study: Building Confidence & Community

The Opportunity

A participant was supported into a volunteering placement with Revolve Recycle, which provided a structured, supportive environment to develop skills and confidence.

What They Did

- Contributed over 80 hours across 16 weeks
- Supported day-to-day operations
- Learned workplace processes, including quality control and safe working practices

The Impact on the Individual

- Significant increase in confidence
- Improved communication and teamwork skills
- Stronger sense of routine and purpose
- Greater awareness of their own abilities and future opportunities

Wider Impact

- Built strong social connections within the team
- Encouraged family members to get involved in volunteering
- Contributed positively to the organisation's work and team culture



Case Study 2: Progression & Wellbeing

The Opportunity

A participant joined the MorphFit Gentle Movement Project, drawing on their prior caring experience while developing new skills in a supportive, health-focused environment.

What They Did

Contributed nearly 90 hours of volunteering
Supported a range of community health sessions
Engaged with participants in structured activities
Gained a First Aid qualification

The Impact on the Individual

- Improved confidence and sense of purpose
- Enhanced wellbeing and mental health
- Development of practical and transferable skills
- Increased motivation to continue progressing

Wider Impact

- Continued involvement in volunteering
- Greater readiness for future opportunities
- Recognised as a valued member of the team



Case Study 3: From Quiet Participation to Confidence

The Opportunity

The participant was matched to a volunteering placement with Swaddle, providing a structured and supportive retail and sorting environment. The placement was designed to help her build confidence, particularly in communication, while developing practical workplace skills.

What They Did

- Completed 8 weeks of volunteering
- Supported day-to-day shop and hub activities, including sorting, organising, ironing, and preparing items for sale
- Worked as part of both the shop and warehouse team, contributing to core operations
- Engaged with staff and volunteers in a supportive team environment

The Impact on the Individual

- Significant improvement in confidence and communication skills, progressing from minimal interaction to engaging in conversations with staff
- Developed a strong work ethic and ability to complete tasks to a high standard
- Reported improved confidence and readiness for future employment opportunities

Wider Impact

- Demonstrated reliability and commitment, leading to continued volunteering beyond the programme
- Contributed positively to the organisation's daily operations and team culture
- Highlighted the effectiveness of supported volunteering in enabling individuals to overcome barriers and progress

Enabling Quality Support Through Investment

The £55 per day contribution to host organisations is a key enabler of high-quality, supported volunteering placements.

What the Funding Supports

Dedicated Mentoring

Provides time for staff to support volunteers directly

Ensures consistent guidance and supervision

Structured Support

Enables organisations to offer planned, meaningful activities

Supports volunteers to build confidence at their own pace

Organisational Capacity

Increases the ability of third sector organisations to host volunteers

Reduces pressure on existing staff and resources

Inclusive Opportunities

Makes it possible to support individuals with higher or more complex needs

Encourages organisations to participate who otherwise could not

WIDER IMPACT

This investment allows the third sector to play a more active and sustainable role in delivering employability support.


Improves the quality and consistency of placements

Strengthens partnerships between statutory and third sector services

Expands the range of opportunities available

Supports earlier, preventative intervention

Strengthening the Third Sector



Supported volunteering is not only changing lives – it is strengthening the ability of third sector organisations to deliver high-quality, inclusive services.

IMPACT ON ORGANISATIONS

- **Increased Capacity**
- **Volunteers contribute meaningful time and activity**
- **Organisations can deliver more services and support more people**
- **£40,515 distributed to third sector organisations**

- **Stronger Teams**
- **Volunteers bring new energy, perspectives, and lived experience**
- **Positive impact on team dynamics and morale**

- **Greater Inclusion**
- **Organisations are better able to engage individuals with diverse and complex needs**
- **More inclusive and representative volunteer base**

- **Enhanced Service Delivery**
- **Improved quality and reach of services**
- **Additional support for specialist or community-based programmes**

Strengthening the Third Sector

By investing in supported volunteering, the programme is strengthening the third sector as a key delivery partner within the employability system

BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN DELIVERY

The programme has increased confidence across the third sector to engage in employability delivery.

- Organisations feel better supported to host volunteers
- Clear structures and funding reduce risk and uncertainty
- Stronger relationships with statutory partners
- Greater understanding of employability pathways

RIPPLE EFFECT

- The impact extends beyond individual placements.
- Strengthened community connections
- Increased collaboration between organisations
- More opportunities created for future participants
- A more resilient and responsive third sector



Strengthening Employability Pathways

A vital bridge within the wider employability system

The Supported Volunteering Programme plays a critical role in connecting individuals to the right support at the right time, strengthening the overall effectiveness of the employability system.

Providing a supported first step for individuals not yet ready for formal employability provision

How it Adds Value

SYSTEM BENEFITS

Early Engagement

Engages individuals who may not access traditional services
Provides a low-pressure, supportive entry point

Step-by-Step Progression

Builds readiness gradually through real-life experience.
Supports movement into training and employability programmes

Right Support at the Right Time

Ensures individuals are not pushed into unsuitable provision
Reduces drop-out and improves longer-term outcomes

Joined-Up Support

Strengthens links between statutory services and the third sector.
Improves communication and coordination across partners

The programme improves how the employability system functions as a whole.

Reduces pressure on statutory services

Improves participant readiness before entering formal programmes

Increases efficiency of referrals and progression routes
Strengthens the role of preventative, early-stage support

Supported volunteering bridges the gap between disengagement and employment, creating a more inclusive and effective employability system

Future Development & Sustainability

The programme has established a strong foundation, with growing demand, positive outcomes, and increasing confidence across partners.

Growing Demand

Increasing referrals across employability pathways

High number of active placements

Waiting list for volunteering opportunities

Expanding interest from third sector organisations

This reflects both the need for early-stage support and the programme's growing reputation.

Development Opportunities

Expanding Placement Opportunities

Increase the number and diversity of host organisations

Create more opportunities across different sectors

Deepening Partnerships

Continue strengthening relationships with statutory services

Increase engagement with key workers and referral partners

The programme is well-positioned for growth, with strong evidence that continued investment will deliver increased impact for individuals, communities, and the wider employability system

Conclusion

The Supported Volunteering Programme is delivering clear, meaningful impact across South Lanarkshire, supporting individuals, strengthening the third sector, and enhancing the effectiveness of the wider employability system.

SUMMARY OF IMPACT

- Supporting individuals facing complex barriers to take positive first steps
- Building confidence, well-being, and employability skills
- Strengthening the capacity and role of the third sector
- Improving partnership working and system coordination
- Providing a flexible and inclusive pathway into employability

The programme provides a vital bridge between disengagement and employment, ensuring individuals receive the right support at the right time.

With continued collaboration and investment, there is a significant opportunity to build on this success, expand provision, and deliver even greater impact for individuals and communities.



Our Delivery Partners Across South Lanarkshire

The success of the Supported Volunteering programme is made possible through a diverse network of community organisations across South Lanarkshire. These partners provide meaningful placement opportunities that help participants build confidence, develop skills, and engage with their local communities.

East Kilbride

Agape • Darcy's • Drum EK • East Kilbride CAB • Healthy and Active • Hunter House Coffee Shop • Kilbryde Hospice • KWoodlands • Skills Exchange SCIO • Waist Not Want Not • Loaves and Fishes

Cambuslang & Rutherglen (CamGlen)

The Leap Project • Revolve Recycle • Clyde Cycle Park • Grow 73 • CamGlen Radio

Clydesdale

Biggar Youth Project • Clydesdale Community Initiatives • Forth Community Resource Centre • WATIF • CAB Clydesdale • Baby Blue Bee Bunnies • Coalburn Miners Welfare • Healthy Valleys • Wiston Lodge • St Brides Community Group • The Old Schoolhouse Abington • Farmigos CIC • Hope Hub Community Garden • Lanark Development Trust • Clydesdale Heritage SCIO

Hamilton

SMILE • Citizen's Advice Bureau • Swaddle • Morphfit Gentle Movement • David Livingstone Centre • Baby Bank Scotland • Larkhall & District Volunteer Group (LDVG) • The Machan Trust • Larkhall Community Growers • Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Charity Shop • Stonehouse Jubilee Club • St Marys For All

Thank you!

Notice of Thanks

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to the development and success of the Supported Volunteering Programme.

In particular, we recognise the dedication of VASLan staff, Laura Sheffield and Douglas Smith, whose commitment was instrumental in designing and launching the programme.

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We also acknowledge the ongoing support of the Local Employability Partnership, whose strategic input has helped shape and strengthen the programme.

Participants who have trusted South Lanarkshire Council employability workers and Routes to work South, VASLan staff and the third sector to support them on their employability journey.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to all third sector host organisations who have actively supported volunteers. Your commitment, mentoring, and inclusive practice have made a meaningful difference to the lives of participants across South Lanarkshire.

