

The cover features a large dark blue circle in the center containing the text. The background is white and filled with numerous small, faint line-art icons representing various concepts like technology, nature, and industry. Three thick, hand-painted style brushstrokes in yellow, teal, and purple extend from the right side of the blue circle.

CVS Falkirk

# Annual Review

2020/21

*Supporting Our Sector Through COVID-19...*

# Contents

- 3** Introduction
- 4** Volunteering
- 6** Building Capacity
- 8** Events 2021
- 10** A Voice for the Sector
- 12** Partnerships
- 13** Financial Summary
- 14** Thank You and Staff
- 15** Get In Touch

# Introduction

2020/21 has been a year like we have never experienced before – full of change and uncertainty, but also hope, and people coming together to help each other in truly amazing ways.

The people of Falkirk, whether it be the community, third sector groups and organisations, strategic partners, public and private sector, joined forces during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a shared vision of responding to the pandemic, making things happen and provide support to those who needed it most. The CVS Falkirk and District team are proud of our role within this multi agency/multi faculty/ community of support.

We created and facilitated new, more flexible and responsive ways of working, more communication, opportunities for collaboration and partnerships, connection between sectors and statutory partners, sharing of resources helping organisations and communities alike.

It hasn't been an easy year for anyone, however it has demonstrated that by coming together achieved so much more than just responding to the pandemic. This is our "new norm", and we will continue to strengthen our support mechanism, encourage partnership working, increase opportunities for collaboration and empower people and communities to get involved and make a real difference in the Falkirk and District area.

On behalf of the team at CVS Falkirk and District, I would like to thank our membership organisations, local third sector, strategic and statutory partners and communities for your dedication, commitment and energy during this time of adversity. It has been a pleasure to work so closely with you and we look forward to continuing to build on this strong foundation as we move into the recovery phase of the pandemic.

And of course, my heartfelt thanks to the team (staff, volunteers and Directors) who have adapted and worked effectively from home supporting our work. Your dedication, resilience and positivity has allowed us to achieve so much during this challenging period.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'V McRae'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Victoria McRae  
CEO



# Volunteering

The people of Falkirk (individuals, volunteers, local groups and organisations) have a very unique and powerful story to tell about their drive, enthusiasm, and commitment to create community-led activities and solutions to help and support those most at need throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, many traditional volunteering placements and formal volunteering opportunities had to be suspended. However, the desire to volunteer did not waiver; in fact, we supported the biggest movement of volunteers in recent history.

In response, we set up our volunteer centre: Volunteer Falkirk, with dedicated staff resource, new phonenumber, email, [website](#), and [Instagram](#). We worked to develop structure and protocols to ensure the centre was able to support national and local campaigns. One such campaign was Ready Scotland and Scotland Cares, and in liaising with Scottish Government and partners, we provided meaningful information to those already volunteering, and those wanting to get involved.



*Some of the ROOTS Helping Hands volunteers preparing a food parcel during the pandemic.*

We engaged with:

- more than 2,000 potential volunteers
- placing 545 new volunteers into 492 placements
- created regular volunteering hotlists
- supporting over 50 organisations with volunteer management

Through Facebook messages, existing volunteering connections, neighbours and social media campaigns such as our own Being a Good Neighbour' initiative, informal volunteering and community spirit supported other more formal of support, volunteering their time, showing kindness and compassion undertaking tasks and initiatives such as:

- supporting neighbours
- picking up shopping and prescriptions
- supplying food parcels
- lending laptops and iPads for homework and keeping in touch

# Volunteering

- organising online social activities and doorstep visits
- telephone befriending
- driving many miles, delivering practical support

As part of the Volunteer Centre, in partnership with Falkirk Council, Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and national funders, we created the Volunteer Expenses Fund, a new initiative to support volunteers directly incurring expense through their volunteering. Throughout the year, the fund supported 107 volunteers, reimbursing over £37,500 for more than 96,000 miles.

We supported 35 new groups with information on volunteer recruitment, creating new roles, volunteer safety, and PVG and Disclosure Scotland checks. We created multiple programmes of bespoke support (including new volunteer programmes and induction training), and engaged with groups as they returned to their venues and activities.

One example was support to British Red Cross, to recruit volunteer drivers to deliver lateral flow device (LFD) testing kits across the district, to people, organisations and groups who needed them.



*"CVS Falkirk is always responsive to our request for additional volunteer IT tutors. We're always confident that there is support "behind the scenes" for any enquires relating to engaging with volunteers for the club." – Scottish Seniors Computer Club, Falkirk*



*"Volunteering to deliver food parcels has provided me a sense of gratitude as well as insight into how others in the community are less fortunate and sometimes just need a helping hand to get through rough patches in their life." – Vincent*

*"I give my time because my heart is for people and I believe no one should go hungry. It makes me happy knowing I can help, even just talking to someone on the phone lets them know there is people who care." – Karen*

*A Royal Voluntary Service Forth Valley volunteer driver, about to start his prescription deliveries.*

*"I wanted to do something to help the community during the COVID-19*

*pandemic, it's a great feeling knowing you are helping people out and doing something worthwhile." – Gillian*



# Building Capacity

As the sector rose to the challenges of the pandemic, the strain on existing resources and funding became very apparent.

While our services and support moved to an online model the level of support didn't change, as our staff provided flexibility in their support to our local third sector.

In 2020/21, CVS Falkirk assisted in bringing nearly £1,000,000 support to third sector groups and organisations throughout the Falkirk and District area. And the sector did incredible things with that.

One example of this work is our proactive campaign on the Small Business Grant Fund. In May 2020, Scottish Government changed the [fund's restrictions](#), with certain charities and other third sector organisations now able to apply. After being approached by colleagues at Falkirk Council's Rates Department, we promoted these changes, and reached out to various third sector organisations, actively encouraging them to apply.

We supported groups and organisations throughout their application process, including around eligibility criteria and the appeals process. In the end, 20 organisations received £290,000 of unrestricted funding, which they put to remarkable use: some purchased PPE, some made essential changes to their premises, while for others, the funding allowed them to pay staff wages, keeping local people in employment and their knowledge, skills and experience where it was needed.



*Christmas 2020 food hampers by Bo'ness Food Pantry, set up by one of the new community response groups we supported.*

At the start of the pandemic, many community responses and activities launched into action across Falkirk, with people getting meaningfully and actively involved for the first time. We responded by working with the groups as they approached us, and began our own mapping exercises, trying to formulate what service delivery would look like during lockdown.

We brokered relationships, partnering and pairing new groups with experienced ones, which led to increased and essential cross-collaboration, and sharing space and resources. Additionally, facilitating this peer support allowed us to help groups find

appropriate models of working for them to achieve their objectives.

During the pandemic, we supported 3 of these community responses to develop their constitutions and become registered as [Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations \(SCIOs\)](#), which has increased their access to different funding and partnership opportunities.



# Building Capacity

One of the new food projects is a particularly fitting example of the support we provided – we introduced them to a local community hall and its team, who offered use of their space for storage and preparation of food parcels. The project was then able to distribute over 2,000 food parcels. This attracted further funding for the hall, which led to more activity in the hall – they have now set up their own food services and are seeking additional funding, while growing and developing.

This demonstrated how essential communication was required and relied on during the pandemic, specifically, how our efforts through our weekly e-bulletin (with its 1,200 subscribers), [COVID-19 website pages](#) and our social media, have provided clear, reliable information for people across Falkirk's communities.

Our intensive mapping of local support activities was made available via our COVID-19 pages, broken down clearly by area, helping people find support local to them – not just from community groups, but our partners at Falkirk Council, NHS Forth Valley, and guidance from NHS Inform and Scottish Government. Our social media channels reflected these hubs of information, sharing as much as possible to an ever-growing audience; by the end of March 2021, we had almost 1,800 [Twitter](#) followers, with our [Facebook](#) reach increasing to over 26,000 people.

Most importantly, our channels and the information we put out was deliberately accessible, updated regularly, and gathered in one place.

We have worked to make sure our sector is as strong and secure as possible throughout COVID-19. We were integral in encouraging funders to be flexible locally with their approach to service redesign or diversification in response to the pandemic, thanks to our strong links with both national and regional funders.



*"I had only just started when COVID-19 hit our local community; I knew that CVS Falkirk immediately responded to the need to take action at this time.*

*During and following the reopening of services, the board, staff and volunteers are and have been supported and encouraged to apply for funding with over £200,000 being secured over the last 2 years. At the same time, new policies and procedures were refined, and a business development day with a business plan has given us an action plan to work on.*

*Our action plan is about increasing income, cutting costs and still providing services to the community. It has come about due to **all the CVS Falkirk staff** actively helping us in their areas of expertise to ensure our sustainability as we come out of lockdown.*

*We knew that every organisation has had a difficult time, but working closely with all the staff of CVS Falkirk supporting us through the last 2 years has helped expand our services and develop to be more equipped and stronger for the future."*  
– Westfield Park Community Centre (SCIO)

# Events 2021

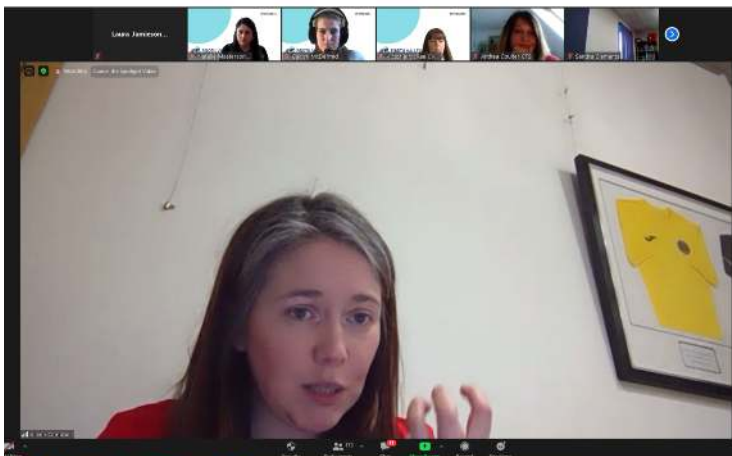
## Forth Valley Third Sector Conference 2021

Together with SVE (Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise) and CTSI (Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface), we held our online Forth Valley Third Sector Conference on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> February, to great success. We welcomed:

- Ms Aileen Campbell, MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Communities, as our guest speaker
- over 200 attendees
- 5 different workshops and 4 networking sessions
- partnership presentations from each Forth Valley area

The Falkirk presentation was a particular highlight. Delivered by Bo'ness and Blackness Community Response, the group spoke about their experiences of partnership working during the pandemic – from setting up their grassroots, informal group to support their community, to working with ourselves, Falkirk Council and established groups in Bo'ness to provide support, connection and food parcels during this difficult time. Hearing how the support we offered to new groups during this time had made such a difference, it only furthered our resolve to be as flexible and responsive as our sector needs to respond to this crisis.

Ms Aileen Campbell, our keynote speaker, focused on the impact of COVID-19 across all communities, highlighting her pride in the third sector rising to the challenges of the pandemic faced locally in our communities:



Ms Campbell during her keynote speech.

*"People have been empowered to do what's necessary. And nowhere have we seen that more than in communities and the third sector - when the country was struggling, you stepped in with all the care and compassion you're known for."*

*"... I want to thank you on behalf of Scottish Government, for everything you've done and everything you continue to do. You responded to the distinctive needs within your communities, because*

*you're embedded within them and know what was needed."*

We also heard from Dr Jim McCormick, CEO of the Robertson Trust, who spoke about their new strategy, vision for the future and working with the sector to reduce poverty across Scotland.





# Events 2021

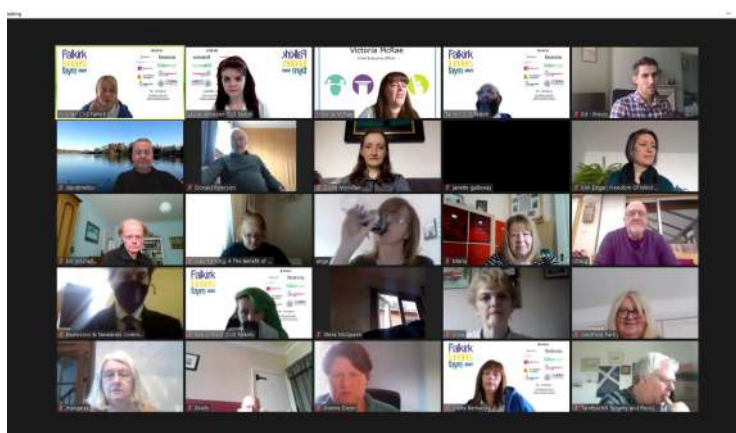
## 2021 Falkirk Funders Fayre

For 2021, we changed the structure of our Falkirk Funders Fayre, but not its heart or its purpose: helping the local sector meet with diverse funders to find out more about the application process, and find the best funding fit for them.

We moved to a 3 day virtual event, welcoming 6 leading grant funders and 3 funding-related technology companies, who each delivered a session, with opportunities for attendees to ask questions.

With over 100 people booked, and an average attendance of over 30 people per session, we're pleased to have been able to bring back the Funders Fayre, and help our sector learn about the new, innovative and exciting opportunities available.

It truly is one of the highlights of our calendar, and we look forward to seeing everyone at the next event in March 2022.



Attendees at the first ever virtual Falkirk Funders Fayre.



Quotes from attendees and funders:

*"[I wanted] to say how much I enjoyed the Fayre, you did a great job organising that, well done! Everyone got the chance to fully listen to all the funders at the same time, then ask questions."*

*"The sessions I attended were very professional presentations which were helpful, interesting and informative."*

*"A very professional job, extremely well done."*

*"My organisation has directly benefited from the support of CVS Falkirk in securing funding. ... I can vouch for their help and support."*

*"A well organised event as always; well done to you all."* – Robertson Trust

*"I think you did a fantastic job with everything today - all very smooth."* – Beacon CRM

*"Thanks for arranging a very positive session, it was great that there was plenty of time for questions and that people had some interesting queries."* – Tudor Trust

# A Voice for the Sector

Like everyone else, last March we had to adapt and move everything online, and quickly. That included the [third sector forums](#) we facilitate.

To help our sector face this challenge from as strong a position as possible, we brought everyone together into one meeting in March 2020, even before the first lockdown was announced. This became the [COVID-19 Third Sector Response Forum](#) (TSRF), with attendees from across the entire Falkirk area, of all different sizes and experiences, and at different stages of their journeys. Through this forum, we have been able to share an incredible amount of information, updates and resources (including restriction and Level changes and what they mean for Falkirk practically, and vital funding information).

- 231 attendees between April 2020 – March 2021
- 157 organisations represented
- attendees from a broad range of groups, organisations and sectors

One achievement of many was that, over winter, we were able to help NHS Forth Valley and Public Health Scotland distribute Vitamin D supplements to food providers and children's services groups, benefiting more than 600 children and over 500 adults across Falkirk and District.

From the response forum came the [Compassionate and Included Communities Forum](#), established in June 2020 to look specifically at mental health and wellbeing in communities. Chaired by a representative from Strathcarron Hospice, the forum became a place to discuss attendees' wellbeing, recognising the toll the pandemic was taking on our third sector workers and volunteers too.

- 61 attendees between April 2020 – March 2021
- 48 organisations represented
- themes raised included inequalities for carers, people with sensory impairments, and learning disabilities, and the impact of those

In addition to the forums, we also set up TapaTalk discussion boards (essential in the early days of the pandemic), and our COVID-19 pages, as well as continuing to use our social media platforms.

Our [COVID-19 pages](#) were launched almost as soon as the response forum. Here, we not only created dedicated space for Scottish Government, NHS and Public Health Scotland guidance, but information on local activities and co-ordination points (third sector or otherwise). These were created for each area of Falkirk (including Falkirk-wide and online activities) and updated regularly.

# A Voice for the Sector

Additional entries – such as [COVID-focused funding opportunities](#), training and how people could get involved in the incredible [volunteering response](#) – allowed us to gather and provide information the sector needed, clearly and in one specific place.

We also created online campaigns with specific themes, from [Review, Review and Thrive](#) (focusing on recovery and rebuilding) to [Safe and Fund Halloween Activities](#) and [Wellness in Winter](#) (with information on everything from flu vaccinations to foodbank availability and travel safety).

In doing so, we made sure the sector and our communities had the information to grow, respond, and have their voice heard at all levels. And we will continue to do so, and update these pages, throughout the pandemic.

We continue to facilitate the forums as directed by our sector, and anticipate that while the format may change, the ethos they value will continue:

- as a point of intelligence for Falkirk Council and Scottish Government updates
- for greater networking opportunities with others in the sector
- for the many examples of collaborative working and partnerships established (which includes funding bids, wellbeing projects and even transport)

Quotes from forum attendees:

*"I think this has been absolutely invaluable – the fact that there's people here from as wide as Bo'ness to Avonbridge to Bonnybridge, I think it's amazing that we're all able to sit down. There's lots of people I probably wouldn't have come across, and there's lots of people we've had different interactions with and connections made, which is brilliant."*

*"Through CVS Falkirk and this forum we managed to get funding to keep our free food programme going, from January right through to Easter, which was just amazing. And sometimes for [volunteers running groups], it's lonely, so the general moral support in the forum – it's just good to see what people are managing to do, it lifts your spirits."*

*"It's CVS Falkirk that's supported us with the funding, and supported us with the restrictions and guidelines. We're well supported around funding and funds we weren't aware of too. It's amazing to see and learn about what's out there, and being able to link in, and that's what it should be. Thank you."*

*"We would like to thank the team for everything you have done throughout COVID in keeping us together to serve the community. A big, big thank you to you all."*



COVID-19 TRSF attendees.



# Partnerships

Since the start of the pandemic, partnership working within our sector and across public and private sectors has been the key to success in creating, developing, facilitating and supporting many activities and initiatives delivered in our local communities to reduce the impact of COVID-19 locally.

With a range of local partners from across different sectors, the Falkirk COVID-19 Coordination Group was set up and met daily to assess the impact on communities from COVID-19, and to liaise, support and contribute to local community initiatives, supporting NHS Inform and Scottish Government guidance.

Partners in the group were: Falkirk Council, CVS Falkirk, Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), NHS Forth Valley, NHSFV Health Improvement Team, Royal Voluntary Service Forth Valley, Falkirk Safebase, and Falkirk Council CLD.

Communication throughout the pandemic was vital, and while we created our own media channels through our website, ebulletin, and volunteering phonenumber, we also supported Falkirk Council's new Support for People (SfP) line, providing regular updates to their knowledge bank, and promoting their service throughout Falkirk and District.

Bringing together local intelligence and organisational information, a service directory was developed by the Coordination Group to highlight services available in communities that the SfP team could either refer or signpost to. This proved to be very beneficial, and essential in providing information for the SfP team to share with those contacting the SfP line.

*"Once again this is enormously helpful at a time of such difficulty."* – local organisation who received funding through the Winter Food Fund, made available thanks to the Coordination Group.

In addition to setting up forums for our sector, we also supported Falkirk Council in setting up their [Community Choices initiative](#) through communication and consultation with our communities and third sector. We have also promoted these widely, along with the [Falkirk Plan](#), and participated in multiple activities in our effort to be a committed, effective member of the Community Planning Partnership.

Our COVID-19 pages were promoted and used as points of reference by multiple partners, including Falkirk Council and NHS Forth Valley. Representatives from the multi-sector Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Planning Group also attended the Compassionate and Included Communities Forum to discuss the new leaflets on mental health and end of furlough resources in Falkirk. These resources were then developed with third sector feedback.

Last year, we commissioned Arrivo Consulting to help demonstrate the scale and value of the third sector's response to our partners. The resulting independent report, focusing on the first 6 months of the pandemic, painted a clear picture of the sector's successes. The "Review of the Third Sector Response to COVID-19 in Falkirk", is available on the [CVS Falkirk](#) website, along with [its summary](#).



# Financial Summary

As with all aspects of our organisation, our finances saw significant changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were tasked with administering a range of grant funding throughout the community in terms of support funds for food and reimbursement of volunteer expenses. As a result of these extra sums of money, our income and expenditure vary greatly when compared to the previous financial year.

In terms of our core funding during 2020/21, this remained quite static in comparison to the previous financial year. Through prudent monitoring of our expenditure and liabilities, and the receipt of management income from projects, the year ended with an overall surplus of £68,612 – out of which £18,387 related to restricted funds being carried forward into 2021/22 for their intended purpose. The balance on general funds at the end of March 2021 was £194,600, an increase of £52,419 from 2019/20.

There were no new project grants undertaken in 2020/21, with the focus being on supporting the sector through the pandemic. Funding continued for the full year from Falkirk HSCP towards our strategic work, supporting the partnership to work with Falkirk's third sector. Our Employability into Volunteering project through Falkirk Council's Employment and Training Unit (ETU) came to an end in March 2021, along with our Community Jobs Scotland placement through SCVO. Both members of staff have been able to be kept on under our core activities, to continue the work they were undertaking in their respective funded posts.

In 2021/22 we proceed with a level of caution around our finances, and new streams of project funding are actively being sought, along with continuing to administer grant schemes for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic as required.

Our main item of expenditure continues to be staff costs, with all other overheads remaining relatively in line with the previous year, and a few savings made due to the office being closed and staff working from home. Throughout 2020/21 our core staff team has remained unchanged, and their dedication and various strengths has been imperative in developing and representing the third sector, especially throughout the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic over the last year.

**CVS Falkirk Income and Expenditure  
2020 - 2021**



Our Audited Accounts and Directors Report for the year are available on request and to download from our website: [www.cvsfalkirk.org.uk](http://www.cvsfalkirk.org.uk)

# Thank You

The biggest thank you will always go to the third sector and communities working in and around Falkirk, but especially this year. Your resilience, commitment and dedication has contributed to your local communities, making a real difference to the lives of others throughout this pandemic, and keeps doing so.

Without your support, this last year would have looked very different, for CVS Falkirk and all the local communities.

## Funders

During 2020/21, we received funding from Scottish Government, Falkirk Council, Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO). We would like to thank our funders and strategic partners for their continued support.

We also distributed over £300,000 of funding to the third sector on behalf of Falkirk Council, Scottish Government, the National Lottery Community Support Fund, Fairer Falkirk Partnership, and NHS Forth Valley.

## Board and Staff

We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who has contributed to our work in 2020/21, including our Board Directors, volunteers, consultants and Arrivo Consulting.

The Board would like to recognise the dedicated service and contributions of those who left the Board in 2020/21 and who are stepping down at the AGM 2021:

*Sobia McGuire, Lindsay Porter, Maria Ford, Claire Macdonald*

We also want to take this opportunity to thank those who left the staff team in 2020/21 for pastures new, and wish them all the very best for the future:

*Heather Reid, Jen Kerr, Jennifer Robertson, Maureen Hill, Katrina MacPherson*

## **Staff Team (as of March 2021)**

**Claire Bernard:** Partnership Manager

**Eve Winters:** Saltire Awards Administrator

**Laura Jamieson:** Development Officer – Partner Communications

**Lynsey Hansford:** Development Officer – Improving Employability Through Volunteering

**Nicola Cox:** Office Manager

**Pam Dixon:** Finance Officer

**Scott Malcolm:** Development Officer – Championing the Sector and Volunteering

**Tariq Mahmood:** Development Officer – Capacity Building

**Victoria McRae:** Chief Executive Officer

# Get In Touch

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, our office is currently closed and our staff are working from home. Our individual email and mobile numbers are listed below - please don't hesitate to get in touch for any support.

	Mobile	Email
<b>Claire Bernard</b> <i>Partnership Manager</i>	07825232057	<a href="mailto:claire.bernard@cvsfalkirk.org.uk">claire.bernard@cvsfalkirk.org.uk</a>
<b>Eve Winters</b> <i>Saltire Awards Administrator</i>	07557532041	<a href="mailto:eve.winters@cvsfalkirk.org.uk">eve.winters@cvsfalkirk.org.uk</a>
<b>Laura Jamieson</b> <i>Development Officer – Partner Communications</i>	07717600520	<a href="mailto:laura@cvsfalkirk.org.uk">laura@cvsfalkirk.org.uk</a>
<b>Lynsey Hansford</b> <i>Development Officer – Improving Employability Through Volunteering</i>	07917006943	<a href="mailto:lynsey.hansford@cvsfalkirk.org.uk">lynsey.hansford@cvsfalkirk.org.uk</a>
<b>Nicola Cox</b> <i>Office Manager</i>	07917008521	<a href="mailto:nicola@cvsfalkirk.org.uk">nicola@cvsfalkirk.org.uk</a>
<b>Pam Dixon</b> <i>Finance Officer</i>	-	<a href="mailto:pamela@cvsfalkirk.org.uk">pamela@cvsfalkirk.org.uk</a>
<b>Scott Malcolm</b> <i>Development Officer – Championing the Sector and Volunteering</i>	07917008590	<a href="mailto:scott.malcolm@cvsfalkirk.org.uk">scott.malcolm@cvsfalkirk.org.uk</a>
<b>Tariq Mahmood</b> <i>Development Officer – Capacity Building</i>	07717032024	<a href="mailto:tariq@cvsfalkirk.org.uk">tariq@cvsfalkirk.org.uk</a>
<b>Victoria McRae</b> <i>Chief Executive Officer</i>	07872464215	<a href="mailto:victoria@cvsfalkirk.org.uk">victoria@cvsfalkirk.org.uk</a>

 01324 692000

 [info@cvsfalkirk.org.uk](mailto:info@cvsfalkirk.org.uk)

 [www.cvsfalkirk.org.uk](http://www.cvsfalkirk.org.uk)



@CVSFalkirk



CVS Falkirk & District is a Company Limited by Guarantee in Scotland No.  
SC085838 | Scottish Charity No. SC000312 | Registered office: Unit 6, Callendar  
Business Park, Callendar Road, Falkirk, FK1 1XR