



The History of the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

1939

Just before the outbreak of World War II The London-based National Council of Social Service (now the National Council for Voluntary Organisations) formed a Scottish Advisory Committee. The Scottish Advisory Committee was given a remit to draft the constitution for the proposed new Scottish Council of Social Service.

The objects of this new organisation were:

- To promote any or all of the purposes for the benefit of the community which now or hereinafter may be deemed by law to be charitable, and in particular the advancement of education, the furtherance of health and the relief of poverty, distress and sickness.
- To promote and organise co-operation in the achievement of the above purposes, and to that end to bring together in Council nationally and locally representatives of voluntary agencies and statutory authorities engaged in the furtherance of the above purposes or any of them.

1943

The war delayed the work of the Advisory Committee but on 1 October 1943 the Scottish Council of Social Service (SCSS) was formally separated from NCSS and established in its own right. It had 75 members representing a wide cross section of voluntary sector activity. By the end of its first financial year, had assets of £642 and a bank overdraft of £42.

1946

In September 1946 the Council was reconstituted as a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The work of SCSS was conducted mainly through a series of committees, many of which are well known today as independent organisations. For example, Age Concern Scotland and Citizens Advice Scotland both began life within SCSS as the Scottish Old People's Welfare Committee and the Scottish Citizens' Advice Bureaux Advisory Committee.

Other activities included recruitment and training of volunteers for emergency relief, the administration of grants and loans for village halls, a Music Committee to encourage amateur music, and a training and loan scheme for rural blacksmiths.

During these years much of the Council's work was dictated by wartime need and its immediate aftermath. Co-operation continued with the long established Councils of Social Service in the four Scottish cities and with others in Greenock and Skye.



1965

By 1965 a total of thirteen CSS had been established; the first CSS conference was held which concluded with a promise by SCSS to continue to support the local Councils and attend their meetings.

The SCSS twenty-fifth annual report records the appointment of a sub-committee 'To seriously consider the need for a Charities Register on the lines of that which exists in England' – something that eventually came to pass 40 years later!

1970s

By the mid-seventies, following changes to its governance, SCSS established a standing committee called Community Organisations Group – Scotland, better known simply as COGS. COGS replaced the former Community Development Committee and had a remit to provide a forum and focus for the interests of Councils of Social Service, Federations of Village Halls, and community associations. At the same time the Scottish Council on Disability (Disability Scotland) was formed, and the Scottish Association of Citizens' Advice Bureau was constituted in its own right and independent of SCSS.

The 1970s saw a gradual change in the way in which SCSS delivered its services with a greater emphasis given to training, information and advice, and policy.

1982/83

A Policy Committee was formed to replace the old Executive Committee. In a further reflection of its evolving function the Council's name was changed in 1983 to the Scottish Council for Community and Voluntary Organisations with the working title of *Voluntary Action for Scotland*.

1985/86

A resolution put to the members in 1985 that the name be changed yet again, to the Scottish Council for Voluntary Action was defeated because it might cause confusion with the newly formed Volunteer Development Scotland, but in 1986 the name Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations was finally adopted.

1994

By 1994 it was apparent that the Council's governance would need further change to properly conduct the affairs of a rapidly evolving and expanding organisation, so in 1995 the present committee structure was introduced.

Policy development for the voluntary sector in Scotland was devolved to a newly constituted Policy Committee nominated and elected by SCVO members, and day-to-day management the responsibility of a small number of Company Directors meeting as the Management Board.

2002



In Summer 2002 SCVO moved to its current home at the Mansfield Traquair Centre (pictured left).

The Centre was officially opened by Prince Charles in November 2002 (pictured right).



2006-2008

SCVO hosted the 6th, 7th and 8th CIVICUS World Assemblies in 2006, 2007 and 2008. The event brings organisations working at the local, national, regional and international levels to help strengthen citizen action and civil society throughout the world, especially in areas where participatory democracy and citizens' freedom of association are threatened.

Around a thousand delegates attended each year, and highlights included speeches from Pascal Lamy, Jimmy Carter, Desmond Tutu and Mary Robinson.

2007-2012

The BIG Lottery Fund is investing £8 million in the Supporting Voluntary Action (SVA) programme, the largest ever non-statutory investment in the third sector in Scotland. The programme runs from April 2007 to March 2012 and aims to strengthen local support for the voluntary organisations in Scotland. SCVO provides the day to day support for the programme and stakeholders from across Scotland are involved in advisory groups which set the strategic direction. Click [here](#) to find out more.