FOYSOL CHOUDHURY MSP
MEMBER OF THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT FOR LOTHIAN REGION

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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

BULLETIN

> *Ultimately, the power to rebuild trust in politics relies on us. It relies on MSPs being out and visible in our communities and listening to people's concerns.*

VOLUNTEERS: THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITIES

This year marks 40 years of Volunteers' Week, a campaign that celebrates the dedication of those who give their time to support others. As a Co-Convener of the Cross-Party Group on Volunteering I recognise the remarkable impact that volunteers continue to have throughout Scotland.



WHY VOLUNTEERING MATTERS?

According to Inspiring Scotland's report:

- 72% of *Intandem* mentors say their volunteering improved their mental health.
- 81% reported it helped their career or job prospects.
- £400k in free, skilled support delivered last year through the Specialist Volunteer Network.
- Since 2016, 1,000 volunteers have mentored young people in or on the edge of care.
- Volunteers help organisations thrive, saving costs, building capacity, and making services more inclusive.



Strengthening Community Bonds

At the North Edinburgh Community Festival in West Pilton Park. It was great to speak with so many people, I picked up on some key issues facing the community, and I'll be taking them forward to ensure your voices are heard.

I BACK OUR VOLUNTEERS

Across Lothian and beyond, volunteers are the backbone of our communities, and I will always champion their contributions.

I'm pleased to see, Inspiring Scotland's new report, ***Catalysts for Change***, which offers valuable insights into what drives people to volunteer, and how we can better support and retain them.

It's a timely reflection, volunteering rates have dropped since the pandemic, yet the desire to help remains strong.

CHECK OUT THE REPORT

SCAN ME

CELEBRATING CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

It was an honour to take part in the very first Vaisakhi Mela 2025, a vibrant celebration of Sikh culture. Events like this matter because they create space for people to connect, learn from one another, and take pride in the cultures that shape our shared communities.





ENCOURAGING COMMUNITY SPORTS

I've really enjoyed attending events like the Gurkha Cup, the SBL Multicultural Badminton Tournament, and the Lal Shobuj Sporting Club Tournament. Each one was a powerful reminder that sport is about so much more than competition, it brings people together, breaks down barriers, and celebrates the diversity that strengthens our communities.

TIME FOR REFLECTION: DR. YAHYA BARRY

I was proud to nominate Dr. Yahya Barry from Shahjalal Mosque in Edinburgh to speak at Time for Reflection.

Dr. Barry is not only a respected academic but, a powerful voice for inclusion & equity, across Scotland. His thoughtful leadership continues to inspire dialogue and build bridges within and beyond faith communities.



MORE THAN BOOKS:
LIBRARIES BUILD BRIDGES

As Convener of the Cross-Party Group on Culture and Communities, I recently helped lead a discussion in Parliament on the future of culture in Scotland. One message was clear: libraries are not just buildings filled with books, ***they are spaces of connection, safety, and community.***

However, closures are disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable areas, with a closure rate of 7% compared to just 3% in more affluent regions.

That's why I will continue advocating for investment in libraries, museums, and community cultural spaces, recognising them as essential infrastructure for inclusion, learning, and wellbeing.

VOICEBOX

What a joy to see 32 of Scotland's funniest young finalists light up the Scottish Parliament with their best jokes! From clever one-liners to confident deliveries, they reminded us just how powerful humour can be. Huge thanks to RCSLT and Collins Big Cat for making it all happen, and an even bigger cheer for the brilliant finalists who made the day one to remember!



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LET'S CONTINUE WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER SCOTLAND.

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