Give A Little, Get A LOT

Volunteer Midlothian
LEADING THE WAY IN VOLUNTEERING

Strategy 2015 - 2018

INVESTORS IN YOUNG PEOPLE GOOD PRACTICE AWARD
The Scottish Government Riaghaltas na h-Alba
EFQM
Committed to excellence
Volunteer Midlothian Strategy – 2015 to 2018

Background to Strategy
The last few years have been a challenging but exciting journey for our organisation. Following the loss of some core funding in 2008 we found ourselves in unsuitable premises rapidly losing touch with the individuals and organisations that we were committed to serve. We struggled to see the way forward yet as a staff team we were committed to make the changes necessary to secure our future. In April 2010 we took stock and reaffirmed our vision, purpose and strategy. By focusing on our PROFILE, PEOPLE and PREMISES we began to address our situation and take positive action. This strategy, which has been developed over the past 5 years, has resulted in the organisation taking significant steps in its journey to re-establish itself as the lead agency for volunteering development in Midlothian.

Under PROFILE we considered how others see us; namely potential volunteers, clients, organisations, Council staff, key local people and potential funders. We carried out a needs analysis to find out what local organisations wanted from us and how we could best meet their needs. This led to the establishment of a successful Volunteer Manager’s Forum and the launch of a new website which contains a searchable volunteering opportunities database. A key factor in raising our profile has also been to network and become actively involved in the Midlothian Community Planning process. At the same time we recognised the importance of Facebook and Twitter and the need to regularly communicate with people through social media sites.

Under PEOPLE we considered our greatest asset – our staff team. We set the task of examining staff roles and ensuring that they were still fit for purpose. This led to a number of changes to role descriptions and job titles. The previously flat management structure was no longer appropriate as the staff team had doubled in size. Staff were reorganised into teams and Managers were appointed to oversee these and form the Management Team together with the Director and Business Support Officer.
Under PREMISES we faced a more difficult challenge, but in 2011 we secured offices in Dalkeith which made a great deal of difference to our profile and the development of our work. In recent months we have had to move again. Although this involved a considerable amount of upheaval for the organisation we focused our energies on ensuring minimum disruption to our services and making our new premises into a welcome location for volunteers, service users, organisations and colleagues.

The success of our 5 year journey has led to many other opportunities opening up. We developed the Transform programme to successfully engage young people in supported volunteering. We created a community garden in Dalkeith Country Park and ran Beadazzling, an innovative retail project which provided work experience and employability training to young people. A new partnership project has commenced with Ageing Well which builds on our successful intergenerational work within sheltered housing complexes. Our Connect team has grown, developing a range of award winning services to support older people and people with dementia, engaging volunteers from 16 to 90 years through befriending and group facilitation activities. Through Connect Online we built on the success of the Sidekicks Project to provide computer tuition to socially isolated older people and harder to reach groups. This has grown to include tuition for job seekers and adults seeking one-to-one computer tuition within a library setting. In all our activities we have been indebted to our funders who have had confidence in our ability to deliver high quality services which are on budget and exceed set targets and outcomes.

In 2014 we rebranded as Volunteer Midlothian. We believe that our new name and logo better reflect the work that we do to develop volunteering in our local area. We are no longer just a 'centre' for people to find out about volunteering opportunities. In addition to our work with organisations and individuals we run a
number of projects which provide good quality volunteering opportunities for people of all ages but which also contribute to Midlothian's Community Planning priorities by providing services to local residents

All this has been carried out in a difficult economic climate and amidst major changes to the way in which Third Sector Support organisations are organised and funded. We now receive our core funding from the Scottish Government as part of the Midlothian Third Sector Strategic Interface. This is a partnership between Volunteer Midlothian, Midlothian Voluntary Action and the Social Enterprise Alliance Midlothian. We have developed a joint Business Plan and report collectively to the Scottish Government twice a year.

So now in the Autumn of 2015 we find ourselves in a different place, in terms of our PROFILE, PEOPLE and PREMISES. We are on the threshold of the next stage in our development against a backdrop of funding difficulties. Our physical growth; the political and economic climate; and our new areas of work have inevitably led to many questions. ‘What now? What sort of organisation do we want to be in the next three years? What is our vision? How might we structure ourselves better and how can we generate resources to help sustain our future?’

The Vision: Where we want to be

Following consultation with staff; Board; clients and partners we revisited our vision and objectives to ensure that they were still fit for purpose. The results fed into the work of the Board Strategy group, emerging as a new vision statement and the four key themes of our new strategic plan:

**Develop; Transform; Connect and Sustain.**

As an organisation we have grown considerably in the last few years and with sufficient resources have the potential to grow even bigger. Although this may be desirable it can bring additional problems and could ultimately lead to Volunteer Midlothian providing a far less effective service. We must not lose sight of why we exist but we must also be open to new ways of promoting and developing volunteering in Midlothian.
Vision Statement
Our existing vision statement is ‘To encourage and inspire more people to volunteer and ensure that organisations have access to the best possible expertise and guidance on volunteering policy and practice’. While our commitment to this hasn’t changed we believe that due to the changing nature of the organisation our purpose is better served by a vision statement that encompasses the different strands of our work: ‘Leading the Way in Volunteering’.

Shared Values
We have adopted the following values to shape our work and our culture. They guide how we behave and make decisions:

- We strive for **Excellence** in all that we do, delivering what we promise to the best of our ability and adding value to the services that we provide.
- We treat everyone fairly and with **Respect**.
- We value **Inclusiveness**. Individuals and partners are recognized and appreciated for their differences in characteristics, backgrounds, motivations, values, and aspirations.
- In promoting **Equality** we believe that everyone in society, regardless of race, sex, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social background, formal qualifications or perceived success, has some passion, skill or talent that can make a difference to someone else’s life as well as his or her own.
- We recognize that volunteering is a two-way process. It is a shared experience in which there is **Mutual Benefit** for the volunteer and volunteer involving organisation.
- We value **Freewill and choice**. Volunteering is always a matter of choice. We accept that each person will have a different reason for volunteering and that each reason is valid.
- We take **Accountability** for our actions and deliver what is agreed. We take ownership over our work.
Valuing our People

As an employer we believe in harnessing the skills and talents of our staff and volunteers, recognizing the contribution that they make to the organisation. We value all our employees and volunteers by practicing and promoting:

• Fairness and respect
• Honesty, integrity
• Consideration and mutual trust
• Personal development
• Recognition of merit and commitment
• Co-operative and inclusive working

Key Themes

• We want to DEVELOP our volunteering services to ensure that more people in Midlothian experience the benefits of volunteering.

• We aim to TRANSFORM the lives of young people in Midlothian by providing them with a positive volunteering experience.

• We strive to CONNECT local communities through a range of volunteer-based services for isolated older people, vulnerable adults and people with dementia across Midlothian.

• We aim to SUSTAIN our current delivery, while improving the quality and effectiveness of the services we provide.
The Strategy: How we get there

Consolidation

After a period of rapid growth it is important to take stock of where we are and consolidate the valuable work that is being done. We need to explore ways to secure more sustainable funding and generate income to maintain and improve the services we currently offer.

Commitment

We are committed to strengthening and developing our two staff teams: Volunteering Services and Connect. Funding has been secured until April 2018 to continue to provide volunteer-led services; long term befriending as well as community connecting, group facilitation and IT activities for isolated older people and job seekers. These services are highly valued by those who have made use of them but all require significant resources to ensure that they continue to be available to the local community.

We will continue to work in partnership with others to develop and promote volunteering opportunities in Midlothian. We will strive to embed co-production in the design and delivery of our services. We believe that it is important to combine our mutual strengths; experience and resources so that we can work together, on an equal basis, to achieve positive change in our community.

Communication

We will continue to improve how we communicate with potential and existing volunteers; organisations; funders and the wider community. Improvements to the website; e-bulletins; new posters and leaflets; articles in local media and the use of social media will help us to appropriately communicate all aspects of our work. We will explore different ways of reaching out to the people that are most in need of our help.
The Strategy: What We Will Do

DEVELOP VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers

- We will promote a wide range of volunteering opportunities within Midlothian to meet the needs and expectations of a broad and diverse range of potential volunteers
- We will guide people to opportunities which reflect their interests, experience and capabilities
- We will carry out regular promotional campaigns to encourage more people to volunteer and will take part in local events to increase the number of people engaging with our service
- We will encourage volunteers to give feedback on their experience of using our services
- We will provide practical support to resolve any difficulties that volunteers might encounter in their volunteering placement
- We will provide access to quality online opportunities, on the Volunteer Midlothian and Volunteer Scotland websites, which give people a choice of placements with up-to-date information
- We will ensure that there is recognition for volunteering achievement and commitment through the organisation of an annual awards ceremony
Organisations

- We will develop new links with local organisations and agencies, encouraging volunteer development and building capacity through training and advice
- We will ensure that volunteer managers and other staff receive relevant and up-to-date information and training on legislation and good practice relating to the involvement of volunteers and how to effectively manage them
- We will provide opportunities to network and discuss volunteering issues through our Volunteer Managers’ Forum and individual events
- We will work with organisations to increase the number of volunteering opportunities for those aged under 16

Community Planning

- We will actively develop and promote volunteering in the community planning process through representation on a number of key groups such as the Community Planning Working Group; Improving Opportunities Midlothian; Opportunities for All and the Joint Older People’s Planning Group
- We will help shape and promote a volunteering strategy which will encourage partners to actively develop and support volunteering in Midlothian
- We will continue to develop positive working relationships with key stakeholders including Midlothian Council, Third Sector partners, referrers, and funders
TRANSFORM LIVES

- We will provide specialist, one-to-one advice and support for young people looking to volunteer
- We will promote volunteering to young people aged 25 and under through talks, presentations and information stalls
- We will deliver Get Ready for Volunteering Courses
- We will encourage young people to register for the Saltire Awards Scheme
- We will offer a range of supported volunteering activities for young people aged 14-20
- We will encourage young volunteers to engage in independent volunteering where possible
- We will offer relevant, accredited training to young volunteers to enable them to progress into positive destinations
- We will work with key local partners to encourage young people with additional needs to actively engage in volunteering
- We will continue to develop positive working relationships with key stakeholders
CONNECT COMMUNITIES

For the last 3 years the Connect team has provided volunteer opportunities based on funder and client requirements, focusing on reducing social isolation and increasing health and wellbeing for older people and people with dementia across Midlothian. Over the next three years our services will be developed to include all adults over 16 years. Within this context:

- We will recruit volunteers to work with adults (particularly those over 65 years), including people with dementia, supporting their engagement with the local community
- We will provide bespoke one-to-one or group training to all adult volunteers (over 16 years) wishing to be involved in our Connect projects including Befriender Induction Training, Dementia Awareness training and IT training
- We will encourage our volunteers to participate in further training provided by Volunteer Midlothian such as Moving and Handling training, or signpost them to relevant external training courses including Paths for All, Reminiscence courses and First Aid
- We will provide one-to-one support to volunteers who are participating in befriender matches or home visits for Connect Online learners, and to those assisting with our group activities
- We will encourage two-way communication and give volunteers the opportunity to give feedback
• We will provide advice and support to resolve any difficulties that volunteers might encounter in their befriender match, learner home visit and/or group activities
• We will continue to welcome volunteers with extra support needs
• We will continue to encourage volunteer involvement in the development and delivery of our Connect services to achieve positive changes within our local community
• We will continue to develop our volunteer opportunities based on funding requirements and market need
• We will continue to develop and promote our Connect volunteering opportunities and Volunteer Midlothian through representation on a number of key groups including Joint Older People’s Planning Group, Community Practitioner’s group, Single Dementia Team, Voluntary Sector Forum, MALP, MFIN and various sub-groups

SUSTAIN DELIVERY

Funding
• We will continue to source funding to sustain and develop our existing work
• We will seek more stable, longer term funding
• We will investigate new ways of income generation with the support of the trustees on our Board of Management
Governance

- We will continue to strengthen the governance of the organisation by recruiting additional Board members with valuable skills and knowledge in the areas of human resources, employment law and finance
- Our Board members will work with the Director and Staff to ensure that the organisation meets its strategic objectives
- We will foster stronger links between Board members and Staff through joint training; information sessions; planning meetings and informal events
- Our Board members will be encouraged to access trustee training and other relevant development opportunities

Staff

- We will work hard to ensure that an appropriate staff structure is in place to enable everyone to do their job effectively
- We will ensure that staff can access relevant training and development opportunities
- We will build on the work already carried out with Healthy Working Lives. Our staff Health & Safety Policy will be monitored and up-dated as required and we will work towards the Bronze Healthy Working Lives Award
- The Management Team will be trained in risk assessment and stress awareness and will take steps to ensure that staff receive practical help to ensure their wellbeing in the workplace
- We will develop our staff walking group and organise occasional outings to encourage a good team spirit
- We will encourage and support staff in their personal volunteering by enabling them to take up to 2 days paid leave per year to volunteer
Premises

- We will ensure that clients can easily access volunteering opportunities online and/or through meeting with a member of our Volunteering Services team
- We will ensure that our premises are accessible to all, located within close proximity to the new Border’s railway line and bus routes, with disabled access to the building and meeting room.
- We will continue to offer appointments to clients in other parts of Midlothian if they find it difficult to travel to Dalkeith
- We will continually review the suitability of our premises to ensure that they represent value for money and meet the organisation’s requirements

Quality

- We will continue to improve the quality of our services to meet the needs of our clients and the outcomes agreed with our funders
- We will demonstrate our commitment to the development and employment of young people through implementation of the suggested actions agreed as part of our Investors in Young People accreditation achieved in January 2015
- We will demonstrate our ongoing commitment to quality by working with our Interface partners to renew our EFQM Committed to Excellence status

Membership

- We will review and develop our existing membership criteria for organisations
- We will actively encourage membership representation on our Board of Management

Resources

The strategy outlined here will inevitably result in the need for greater resources. In some cases, for example, additional income may be necessary to improve our communication with potential service users; in others, there may be the need for increased numbers of staff and volunteers. This will be a challenge for the organisation which we don’t underestimate. For a number of years we have been
operating in an extremely difficult economic climate, coping with the rising demand for our services against a backdrop of cuts in public funding; the on-going impact of the economic crisis and other external pressures. In terms of sustainability there are no guarantees but we will continue to explore all available funding streams as well as new methods of income generation. At the same time, in common with many charities, we will continue to review and restructure our business operations as well as explore new opportunities to fund our existing services. Where appropriate we will work in partnership to avoid duplication and ensure that we make the most out of available resources.

Our most valued resource is our people. We will continue to invest in our staff and volunteers, enhancing opportunities for personal and career development through accredited training, coaching and team-building.

**The Strategy: Looking Ahead**

In 2015 as we celebrate 30 years of volunteer support and development in Midlothian we recognise that we have embarked on a new chapter in the life of Volunteer Midlothian. Over the years we have been known as many things: Midlothian Volunteer Bureau; Volunteering First; Volunteer Centre and Volunteer Midlothian. Despite the changing names we have never wavered in our mission to develop and promote volunteering in Midlothian.

We remain committed to serving the communities and residents of Midlothian and are convinced that we can meet the challenges facing the Third Sector at this time.
Volunteer Midlothian is the operating name of Volunteer Centre Midlothian, a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland No. 244806. Registered Scottish Charity No. SC027578.

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