

# PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

As many of you will be aware the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 (POCSA) started coming into force in January. As a result of pressure from the voluntary sector the Scottish Executive decided to stagger the implementation of parts of the Act to allow organisations more time to prepare.

The Act places new legal obligations on organisations (private, statutory and voluntary) that employ paid staff/ volunteers in child care positions which involve working with children/ young people aged under 18.

In brief, POCSA establishes the Disqualified from Working with Children List (the 'List') which will be a list of individuals who Scottish Ministers consider to be unsuitable to work with children.

The List will be made up of individuals referred by the courts who have been convicted of harming a child and individuals who have been dismissed or moved away from working with children as a consequence of harming a child or putting a child at risk of harm.

As of January 10th it has been an offence for anyone on the List to apply to work with children.

For organisations the implications of POCSA are:-

- From January 10th 2005 organisations have had a legal duty to refer individuals to the List if they have harmed a child or placed a child at risk of harm and have been dismissed or moved away from access to children as a result. It is important to remember that making a referral to the List will not be as simple as passing on an individual's name, but will involve you providing a certain amount of detailed information about the individual, the circumstances that have led you to make a referral and how you came to the decision to dismiss them. For this reason, it will be important for you to ensure that your organisation has appropriate and consistent disciplinary procedures in place for both paid staff and volunteers.
- From April 11th 2005 it will be an offence for an organisation to knowingly employ (in a paid or unpaid position) anyone who is on the List. The only route for checking if someone is on the List will be by carrying out a Standard or Enhanced Disclosure check through CRBS or Disclosure Scotland. This means that if an organisation does not carry out Disclosure checks on all new staff and volunteers in child care positions they will be risking prosecution if it is subsequently discovered that any new employee or volunteer is on the List.

Standard and Enhanced Disclosure checks for staff and volunteers working in childcare positions are now being checked against the List. CRBS have asked that when submitting a Disclosure form for a child care position that organisations prefix the name of the position with the word Childcare in the 'Position Applied For' field (C2) on the Disclosure Application Form so that they know to check against the List.

The Scottish Executive has said that it will be publishing further guidance about the types of groups and organisations that are affected by POCSA and more information about what constitutes a child care position. We will distribute this information as soon as it becomes available. In the meantime, CRBS have a helpline for any voluntary organisation wanting further advice and information about POCSA and its implications – call 01786 849777 and select option 4. In addition see Volunteer Centre Edinburgh's current training programme (enclosed with this newsletter) for details of the POCSA Seminar we are running in May.

## VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATE CEREMONY 2005

Tuesday 7th June 5.30 – 8.30 pm

This year we are planning and running the event in conjunction with City of Edinburgh Council to mark the Year of the Volunteer 2005 and to emphasise the importance of volunteering in our City.

And what a great event it is going to be... after registration you will be served a hot finger buffet with drinks in the European Room of the Chambers, relaxing to the sounds of classical guitar and violin.

We will launch our new history of volunteering project with an exhibition of photos documenting volunteering in the city during the last 100 years.

This will be followed by the formal giving of certificates in the Council Chambers closing with tea and coffee and a chance to chat with fellow colleagues and volunteers. An event not to be missed and we ourselves are very much looking forward to it.

As in previous years the event will be on a "first come, first served" basis as we are very restricted with numbers. Please get your Booking Form back to us as soon as you can to avoid any disappointment.

Enquiries: [admin@volunteeredinburgh.org.uk](mailto:admin@volunteeredinburgh.org.uk)

## THE CHANCELLOR, THE TROMBONE AND THE GERBILS

Recognising the "important role of voluntary action in developing social capital and creating strong and cohesive communities" the Chancellor has announced today in his budget a whole range of measures in support of volunteering, including £100 million over the next three years towards developing volunteering by young people.

On March 16th at Volunteer Centre Edinburgh volunteering looks like this:

The Russell Commission report on Youth Volunteering - all 127 pages of it - pops up on my desk top. I decide not to print it out.

A woman from 'Russia in Scotland' comes in to discuss the CRBS process so she can access police checks on her volunteer Russian Language tutors. Most of them are Russian or Ukrainian - so there will probably be no access to any police records in any case. She knows they are safe to be with children and the parents of the children are in the next room - but the schools where they want to meet require all volunteers to be police checked.

George Thompson, Director of VDS, comes in to discuss some new partnership work about information and resources for volunteer engaging organisations. We discuss the City Volunteering Strategy being developed through the Compact Partnership. I tell him about the new protocol Volunteer Centre Edinburgh has developed with referrers about volunteering by serious or persistent offenders.

At reception several people sit at the directories of volunteering opportunities and browse the database. One of them has fallen asleep at the table and snores loudly. (A reminder to everyone to keep their volunteering opportunities exciting and stimulating).

One of our volunteer New Deal mentors, who works in financial services, waits for her mentee - who is late - so she browses the volunteering directories and decides to volunteer for Management Committee work.

Paul discusses a partnership project proposal with the Living Memory Association to record and archive the history of volunteering in Edinburgh.

A 17 year old guitar and trombone player self advertises her skills through our e-mail bulletin to do group music sessions with older people – and a Classical Hatha Yoga tutor offers her time to groups for free.

Kade reports that the team of young volunteers from Streetwork doing up the community flat in Gilmerton will have the flat ready for the official opening by the First Minister on April 8th.

Sarah takes a call from Petcare Network about gerbils. Becky from the Church office upstairs comes down for refuge as she has been locked out.

This is the strong and cohesive community of volunteering.

Happy Easter from all of us at the Volunteer Centre.

Harriet Eadie

## DATABASE REVIEW

If you are a volunteer organiser with details registered with us, you will recently have received the first of a twice yearly review of the information we currently hold on your organisation.

Unfortunately we are having to "get strict" and say that if we don't hear back from you by 8th April 05 your details will be deleted.

The administrative burden of maintaining the database is such that if we don't take this rather drastic approach, we will be unable to maintain an up to date database that is genuinely useful for volunteers.

Please remember that our primary concern is that we provide potential volunteers (whether visiting us or via the website) with good quality information which in turn will provide you with some excellent volunteers. Let's work together with this in mind. We look forward to receiving all of your replies.

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Thanks:  
City of Edinburgh Council  
Big Lottery Fund  
Scottish Executive  
Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland  
Laidlaw Foundation  
Robertson Trust

Special thanks to our many dedicated volunteers.

Scottish Charity SCO29681



## GORDON'S CASE FOR VOLUNTEERING

The last few years has seen an unprecedented interest from government in the voluntary sector in general, and volunteering in particular. Mark Steven wonders why.

Both Westminster and Holyrood governments have announced a raft of measures in support of volunteering during the last year. The Executive has renewed its commitment to the Volunteer Centres in Scotland and to Volunteer Development Scotland, providing a boost to their core funding. New, national schemes include Project Scotland, Pupil Volunteering, and support for Volunteering in Sport, with a re-launch of the Millennium Volunteers Initiative planned for later this year.

During the last eight years there has been a significant change in the relationship of volunteering infrastructure agencies (such as Volunteer Development Scotland, Volunteer Centre Network, CSV etc) with Government.

One key factor that has led to greater cooperation and ultimately increased funding between the Voluntary Sector and Government is the advent of the Scottish Parliament and changes at the Scottish Executive, the accessibility of which has contributed to the mainstreaming of the agendas of volunteering infrastructure organisations.

The other factor is New Labour. Since the party's installation in government in 1997, its commitment to liberal economics and its apparent concern about social issues has been consistent, leaving the voluntary sector poised alongside Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs) to deliver on the social and community aspects of the New Labour agenda.

At the Treasury launch of the 2005 Year of the Volunteer Gordon Brown said: "Call it civic society, call it civic patriotism, call it the giving age, or call it the new active citizenship, call it the Great British society - it is Britain being Britain". In February Gordon Brown announced Labour's manifesto pledge to establish a system of national voluntary service for young people.

**From page 1:**

It is telling that it is the Chancellor who is making speeches about volunteering.

Gordon Brown's Golden Rule is that a government should only borrow in order to finance investment, not day to day spending. What better way of mitigating the risks of departmental and local authority overspends and consequently government borrowing, than by contracting to third parties for the provision of public services, grant funding them from fixed pots of cash. In the spirit of 'fiscal prudence', the New Labour government is seeking to deliver on its election promises while spending on public services is carefully controlled.

For the voluntary sector in Scotland this has meant an increase in Scottish Executive funding of around £70 million (23%) between 2001 and 2004. Annual combined direct and indirect funding of Scotland's voluntary sector stood at £375 million in the last financial year.

The way in which these monies are distributed has

Mark Steven

## GOOD SPORT

New Year, New Job! I joined the team at Volunteer Centre Edinburgh in January as the Volunteering in Sport Regional Development Officer. This, rather catchily titled post is one of 6 throughout Scotland, funded by Sport Scotland; I cover the Lothians and Borders.

I first started working in the voluntary sector for the mental health charity Mind in 1993 (hard to believe that's 12 years ago now!) after time spent in secretarial work, recruitment and teaching. I then went on to manage volunteer-involving projects in Harrogate and Sheffield in the areas of physical disabilities and mental health. I've also volunteered in a range of roles; with children, on a kibbutz and conservation/practical work. Most recently, I was the Volunteer Manager at 'The Yard', an adventure play facility for children and young people with additional support needs here in Edinburgh.

In 2003/04, Sport Scotland and partner organisations from sport and the voluntary sector worked together to review the national strategy for sport – Sport 21 (originally produced in 1998). This has been endorsed by the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament and has 3 long term visions:

- A country where sport is more widely available to all.
- A country where sporting talent is recognised and nurtured.
- A country achieving and sustaining world class performances in sport.

also changed significantly. In 2000 most Executive funding found its way to the voluntary sector indirectly, with only 11% of funding awarded directly to voluntary sector organisations. By 2004 the situation had more or less reversed, with 70% of funding going direct to the voluntary sector, with the remaining 30% channelled to the sector via Scottish National Heritage, Scottish Arts Council, Health Boards and Enterprise agencies. This would suggest that the Government genuinely does have increasing confidence in the voluntary sector to manage its affairs appropriately and to deliver the services that it promises to provide.

Volunteering is currently a political coat of many colours. It provides the feel good factor of positive social reforms. It connects to hearty, nostalgic notions of supportive, nuclear communities. It provides a robust, adaptable means of responding to changing social needs.

But it is also intimately, mysteriously connected with fiscal policy and the monetary measures employed by the Chancellor to manage the economy.

One of the key targets of Sport 21 is Target 10 - 'Sustaining and Developing our Volunteer Base', which is where our posts come in!

In Scotland, 26% of adults who volunteer do so in sports or recreational activities\* and the best current estimate is that there are around 150,000 regular sports volunteers. They play a vital part in the development and delivery of Scottish sport, enabling other people to participate by contributing in numerous ways; governing bodies, officials out on the field, committees and coaching are just a few examples. Target 10 aims to sustain, support and encourage volunteers in sport and develop a systematic framework for recruitment and retention.

My new role will involve getting out and about and working with local agencies and organisations, promoting and developing good practice models for involving volunteers in sport. We also want to encourage networking and information exchanges amongst organisations themselves and with their local volunteer centres.

I am really glad that I have a range of experiences working directly with volunteers and also of volunteering myself. I am able to fully appreciate the positive impact that volunteering can have, both for the organisation and the volunteer. With such a high level of volunteer involvement in the sports sector, this is especially significant for my role and I'm looking forward to getting out and about in my area and working with organisations.

Sam Tock

\* VDS, Annual Digest of Statistics

## PLAYING POLICTICS

**With the election coming the political parties are mobilizing their volunteers to help beat their rivals to election victory. Given that party-political volunteers are generally active citizens concerned about making the country a better place, Paul Wilson wonders why the Volunteer Centre isn't helping people to get involved.**

Two tree-hugging greenies, an unapologetic petrol head, an outraged Tory activist and one animated discussion on the rights and wrongs of the recent congestion charging referendum: Not the line up for a late night Channel Four debate programme but a group of staff from the Volunteer Centre in the pub. I like the fact that my colleagues are a disparate range of people who privately hold passionate and diverse opinions. It certainly makes nights out more interesting.

We are not paid by the Volunteer Centre to have political opinions and the Volunteer Centre as an entity is apolitical. Yet intermittently the issue of political volunteering causes us much debate and discussion. In its 30 odd years the Volunteer Centre has never recruited volunteers for political parties. But why not?

To register with us and recruit volunteers an organisation must be non-profit and be prepared to sign up to our Vision and Values. Most mainstream political parties would have no difficulty in subscribing to those principles. So we can legitimately start recruiting volunteers for political parties, but what about those political parties which are less main stream? Where would we stand if the British National Party wanted to recruit volunteers through us? The easy answer is that they couldn't register because they couldn't sign up to our Vision and Values, but what would happen if they said they did agree with our principles as far as volunteers are concerned? What if they said that they could sign up to our Values including those on diversity and equal opportunity for all volunteers? We would then be in the situation where we would have to exclude them not on their inability to sign up to our values but on the simple fact that we found what they stood for offensive. I also suspect that most of you would agree with that decision but can we really just rely on the Volunteer Centre to make judgement calls based on whether we approve or disapprove of an organisation?

This goes beyond political parties too. We all accept that activism is a legitimate and important part of volunteering and campaigning organisations like Friends of the Earth use our services to recruit volunteers. Many of you will have an interest in their

work and feel that it is appropriate that we do recruit for them. But if we accept that we will recruit volunteers for one campaigning organisation we have to be prepared to accept requests from others too. And what happens when we don't agree with their actions? Peaceful protest is an important part of our democracy, but no matter how much you dislike their burgers chucking a brick through a MacDonald's window is not acceptable behaviour. While no one is suggesting that the Volunteer Centre can be responsible for the actions of every individual within every organisation, if an organisation registered with us and we don't approve of their methodologies should we stop recruiting volunteers for them? We are back at that judgement call again.

And that's the problem. Whose judgement call should it be? The Director, the Board, the majority view? I know the buck stops with the Board but with the staff group's disparate and strongly held views I can envisage some conflicts of conscience. We can't agree on whether we should have a water cooler in the office for goodness sake! What hope would we have if we were asked to debate the merits of recruiting volunteers for a pro-life organisation? Trust me it would be handbags at thirty paces.

We are genuinely interested in adding to this debate. We'd very much like to hear from our stakeholders on what your opinion is on us diversifying the organisations that we recruit volunteers for, particularly the political parties. If you would like to add to the debate we'd love to hear from you and take this forward in our next newsletter. Who knows we might even agree with you!

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## PROJECT SCOTLAND

Project Scotland is a new independent non profit organisation focused on offering full time volunteering for 16-25 year olds.

The organisation is now seeking partners in the voluntary and public sector, who are able to develop full time placements of between 3 and 12 months in locations across Scotland.

For more information on becoming a Placement Partner with Project Scotland, call the team on 01312260700 or email [info@projectscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@projectscotland.org.uk).

## NEW WORKER FOR YOUTH

Young people are fabulous! They have so much energy, enthusiasm, ideas, and a whole lot of fun. Plus, young folk are an inspiration to work with. I really enjoy working with young people and get a lot out of it personally - it's a great feeling knowing that you've somehow made a positive contribution to someone's life.

So, to give you a wee bit of background to who I am and where I'm coming from: I came to Edinburgh in 1998 when I was 26. I grew up in the Shetland Isles where career-wise I reached the dizzy heights of shelling scallops. Needless to say, after 3 years of early starts and very cold and wet conditions I decided that fish work was not for me, so I looked into alternatives. I learned about the Scottish Wider Access Programme through my local careers office and after previously visiting Edinburgh, I decided that that was it: I would go to Edinburgh to go to college which led on to gaining a place at Edinburgh University to study Psychology. It was during this time I got involved in youth work with Stonewall Youth Project (SYP) as a volunteer. I wanted to help other LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) young people in their lives, and felt it was fantastic that such a project existed. I did have a lot to learn however – shellfish processing doesn't really prepare you for youth work! A year later I was fortunate to be offered sessional work that has since seen me coordinating group sessions, doing one-to-one support, doing outreach and detached youth work, training young people and adults in LGBT awareness, going on residential, and a myriad other fantastic things too. I was also fortunate in being part of the team that saw SYP develop into LGBT Youth Scotland and develop work in other parts of Scotland on a National level beyond the original remit of Edinburgh and the Lothians. I'm happy to say that five years later I'm still there and am still very much enjoying the work that I do.

In 2003/04 I had a wee break from work, Edinburgh and everything else, and went travelling round Australasia and SE Asia. It was a wonderful experience that I would recommend to everyone. On returning to Edinburgh I was offered my "old" sessional job back, but also needed a more full-time job – these bills don't pay themselves... I saw the Youth Volunteering Development Worker post at the Centre advertised and thought it would be great job to do. I could relate to the purpose of the post and how important it is to develop and promote opportunities for young people to further their own lives. I thought it would be a great opportunity and a challenge. Plus, the part-time hours still meant that I could continue working at LGBT Youth.

I'm sure my work at the Volunteer Centre with young people will be as enjoyable as the youth work I have been involved with so far. I hope the work that I do here

will enable young people to go on to further opportunities and have better job prospects that may not have been otherwise available to them. I want to see young folks achieve what they are capable of if given the opportunity and support. I want young people to get enjoyment out of volunteering. I also want to see those who don't typically go into further education actually do that, like I did. And, I want to enable young folks to be the fabulous people that they are - despite what some folks say about them!

## LIDLAW TEAM WORK



Tina Murray of the Volunteer Centre's Power of 5 project chats with Jack McConnell and Lord Laidlaw

Volunteer Centre Edinburgh's two Laidlaw funded youth teams have attracted high profile visits from First Minister Jack McConnell and Lord Laidlaw. The first team, brought together by the Give Youth a Chance project and Volunteer Centre Edinburgh consists of 25 young people in the Gilmerton area. They are giving their time and energy to redecorate a community flat which is used by Residents' Associations and other community groups. The other team of 5 are developing a web site entitled Power of 5 which will promote volunteering by young people in Edinburgh. The web site will be launched to April, so keep an eye out for [www.powerof5.org.uk](http://www.powerof5.org.uk).

Jack McConnell and Lord Laidlaw met the young people at Volunteer Centre Edinburgh and heard first hand why they got involved and some of the challenges that they have faced in getting the projects completed.