

A VOLUNTEER STRATEGY FOR EDINBURGH

At a recent meeting of Edinburgh Volunteer Organisers' Forum I asked people what they thought about a Volunteering Strategy for Edinburgh. The first question was, what difference will it make? The second was, why do we need another document full of unintelligible policy speak written by committee? As we discussed it more positive views emerged.

A volunteering policy for the City might help the participation gap in volunteering to be narrowed – at present twice as many more well off people volunteer than less well off. It might help a more streamlined and consistent approach to accessing criminal record checks be developed. It might help more Edinburgh businesses become aware of volunteering and actively promote it amongst their staff. It might help more volunteer engaging agencies develop better practice in volunteering. It might lead to more volunteering through schools. It might help new and different volunteering ideas to be developed.

The gist of the meeting was that a Volunteering Policy for Edinburgh will be welcome if, and only if; it is written in plain English; it has the full commitment of the Public and Voluntary Sector Partners who sign up to it; and it commits to specific actions that will make a real difference.

Volunteering is receiving a much higher public profile than previously – but there is still a good deal of misunderstanding as to what it is and how much it touches the lives of every community. The Volunteer Strategy development provides an exciting and challenging opportunity for volunteering to become absolutely embedded in all areas of City life. Let's aim for the stars.

The Process to date...

- The Edinburgh Compact has made developing a Volunteering Strategy a Key Action Point
- A Volunteering Strategy Working Group of Public and Voluntary Sector Partners has been established as a sub group of the Compact Partnership and had a preliminary meeting
- The Council have funded a Volunteering Strategy Development Worker Post within the Volunteer Centre
- Lara Celini has been appointed as one half of this job share post, the other half will be appointed shortly

What next...

- The Working Group will start exploring what a strategy might want to achieve
- Lara and her co-worker will start gathering evidence on current volunteering in the city and what needs to change
- There will be a major Volunteering Conference to shape the main themes of the strategy on 24 November in the City Chambers – put the date in your diary now – details and booking to follow later

Harriet Eadie

**VOLUNTEER
RECRUITMENT
FAIR** 6 October 2005
11am - 7pm

This year's Volunteer Recruitment Fair promises to be more popular than ever. Don't miss this fantastic chance to recruit volunteers! Booking forms are available at www.volunteeredinburgh.org.uk/fair.

Email admin@volunteeredinburgh.org.uk for more info, or call the Volunteer Centre.

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Thanks:
City of Edinburgh Council
Big Lottery Fund
Scottish Executive
South Edinburgh Social Inclusion Partnership
Laidlaw Foundation
Robertson Trust

Special thanks to our many dedicated volunteers.

Scottish Charity SCO29681

The screenshot shows the website for 'Power of 5', a newsletter from Volunteer Centre Edinburgh, dated July 2005. The page features a navigation menu with links: HOME, BE INSPIRED, GET INVOLVED, FAQ, and CONTACT. A central banner reads 'Welcome. Hey, Ciao. Whasssup?! You have reached Power of 5, Volunteer Centre Edinburgh's portal for young Edinburgh people aged 16-25. Take a look around. Make a difference. Change your life. Go on - you know you want to.' To the right, a list of featured articles is titled 'THIS ISSUE:' and includes: 'Young Volunteers: Power of 5 / MVA', 'Giving Youth a Chance: Gilmerton Streetwork', 'Standing Proud? Power Investors in Volunteers', 'Certifiable Behaviour: Volunteer Certificate Ceremony', 'On the Buses: New Campaign', and 'Mind the Gap: A Volunteer Strategy for Edinburgh'. The main heading at the bottom of the page is 'YOUNG VOLUNTEERS'.

The contempt was written all over his face. Suddenly I had gone from "cool uncle" who knew about cars and roller blading into a monstrous embarrassment who just knows nothing.

My crime? An apparently unforgivable faux pas about his taste in music and the nuance of classification. How was I to know? I listen to Terry Wogan in the morning AND I am not ashamed of it. Sadly the 25 year age gap between my nephew and I had just become a chasm ...in his eyes I could see exactly how old 38 is.

Probably just as well then that when we identified the need for a website aimed specifically at encouraging younger people to volunteer, that we took the wise decision not to embarrass ourselves by trying to get in touch with the "youth" and produce a website for them. We took the smart route and recruited some real young people and worked with them to produce the site. They designed it. They wrote the copy. They came up with the ideas. My colleague Mark (who I think was a little disappointed that he was no longer "young" enough to do it himself... well those boyish good looks don't make up for the 30 somethingness of a mortgage and a Volvo) provided the volunteers with support, guidance and web-technical expertise. The result? www.powerof5.org.uk a custom made youth volunteering resource, where the potential volunteer can find out what volunteering is, what they can get out of it, what opportunities are available and what programmes such as Millennium Volunteers and Project Scotland actually mean.

On the subject of Millennium Volunteers Award, it has been relaunched, there will be an official launch later in the year but meantime we are signing people up to the programme, so if you have anyone under 25 volunteering for you, they should consider the benefits of getting that volunteering recognised. Like detergents of old MVA is now new and improved. Some of the key improvements are the introduction of a new 50 hour certificate in addition to the 100 and 200 hours, the ability to claim for hours already completed and the introduction of a "passport" which allows the volunteer to take hours accrued from one lot of volunteering onto another. If you want to find out more about how you as a volunteer involver can promote MVA, or if you have any volunteers under 25 who want to find out more about MVA please contact Kade Moncrieff at the Volunteer Centre.

Paul Wilson

GIVING YOUTH A CHANCE

Over the past few months we have been working in partnership with Streetwork Give Youth a Chance and a team of 25 young people ages 14-16 in South Edinburgh. The team have been doing up a community flat in the Craigour area. On the 17th June the team completed the flat and there was a small unofficial opening with the keys of the newly refurbished flat handed back to the council Concierge service who manage it. What the young people have done is amazing. They have planned, raised funds, sourced materials and furniture, and completed the work themselves.



The flat had been a seriously underused resource and hopefully now in its refurbished form it will become a focus for many local groups. At the start of the project there had been suggestions that a

group of young people wouldn't be able to complete this project, they would lose interest. This just hasn't happened. Despite setbacks and disappointments they have persevered and been a real credit to themselves. This work was supported by the Laidlaw Youth Foundation, who also supported the team of young people who produced the new youth volunteering website www.powerof5.org.uk

There will be an official grand opening of the flat by First Minister Jack McConnell in August and we'll feature this in the next newsletter.

Paul Wilson

ARE YOU PROUD OF THE WAY YOUR ORGANISATION TREATS ITS VOLUNTEERS?

If the answer to the above question is yes, then why not think about applying for Investors in Volunteers, the national award that recognises good practice in volunteer involvement and management? Investing in Volunteers (IiV) is the UK quality standard for all organisations which involve volunteers in their work.

To achieve the IiV Standard organisations need to be able to demonstrate good practice in four key areas of volunteer management:-

- planning for volunteer involvement
- recruiting volunteers
- selecting and matching volunteers and
- supporting and retaining volunteers.

Applying for Investing in Volunteers status provides the opportunity for organisations to review and develop their volunteer management and for good practice to be recognised and rewarded. It is also a way for organisations to publicly demonstrate their commitment to volunteering and to providing their volunteers with the best possible experience. For full details about Investing in Volunteers please go to www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk

HELP WITH COSTS

Volunteer Centre Edinburgh is administering a subsidy scheme funded by City of Edinburgh Council to help locally based voluntary and community organisations involving volunteers in Edinburgh's communities to meet the costs of Investors in Volunteering. For most organisations in Scotland the total cost of IiV will be £1,000 inc. vat. Thanks to the generous support of City of Edinburgh Council, subsidies between £300 and £900 will be available to a limited number of organisations undertaking the IiV process. The level of subsidy awarded will be based on an organisation's annual income in the previous financial year. The closing date for the first round of applications is Friday 29th July 2005.

For full details of the Edinburgh Subsidy Scheme, including eligibility criteria, how to apply and an application form see www.volunteeredinburgh.org.uk or contact Jude Wilson on 0131 225 0639 or email jude.wilson@volunteeredinburgh.org.uk

CERTIFICATE CEREMONY

We were delighted this "Year of the Volunteer" to receive funding from The City of Edinburgh Council in order to continue organising this resplendent affair which concentrates appropriately on thanking many local volunteers for their amazing volunteering efforts over the past year. Changing the format slightly on previous years (.....there is always the fear that this could fall flat on its face!) we moved the whole event to the early evening in the hope that it might feel a little bit more relaxed and a little less rushed all round. This change, we feel, worked well and we began the evening with canapés/ drinks, accompanied by the classical duo "Maelasta", within the beautiful surroundings of the European Room of the City Chambers. The Lord Provost, Lesley Hinds officially welcomed all those invited and opened our newly created photo exhibition celebrating volunteering through the ages. We then moved through to the Council Chambers where Council Leader Donald Anderson regaled us with stories of his own volunteering past and present and how important volunteers are generally within the City of Edinburgh. Harriet Eadie, Director of VCE, then went on to informally "interview" two volunteers



Edinburgh Cyrenians volunteers Anne Marsham, Ole Johannsen and Aisan Afshari with Gill Hamilton, Chair, Volunteer Centre

– one from the PF Counselling Service and one from Girlguiding Edinburgh – it's not easy getting up to speak in front of a large crowd so we really do thank them for accepting our invitation to do this. Finally, onto the Grand Finale, in which VCE Chair Gill Hamilton presented all of the volunteers with their own personal Certificate of Thanks.

Jill Smith

ON THE BUSES

When I started to write this little article about our new bus advertising it was kind of "If all has gone to plan, on your travels on an LRT bus you may have seen our adverts encouraging people to find out more about volunteering" Fine, but perhaps a little uninspiring.

Sometimes in life unexpected things happen and sometimes those unexpected things are just the best. Essentially when we decided to do bus advertising what we wanted to do was get VCE's message out there – to make sure that more people knew who we were and what volunteering is about. It is simple really, the more people knew about the Centre, the more people know about what they can get out of volunteering then the more people are likely to volunteer. Job done. Success. Oddly it was the unexpected results that made me glad we had done it.

Shortly after the adverts first appeared my colleague Sarah got a call from a volunteer that she has been supporting in volunteering for a couple of years. This client had been experiencing a very low period and was on his way to self refer as an in-patient at the Royal Edinburgh. On the way there on the bus he saw one of the adverts. In his words he thought "I do that,

I volunteer, I am important". This revelation made him feel so much better about himself that he felt able to return home, rather than going to the hospital and contact his worker for support.

Last week Sarah was with a new volunteer, who is extremely anxious about starting volunteering, particularly travelling to the place of work by bus. Sarah and her were having a trial run going to the volunteering organisation by bus and quite by chance got onto one of the 70 buses displaying the new VCE adverts. The volunteer saw the ad and was really buoyed and encouraged to see all the positive images and quotes, it made her feel much more confident about her new volunteering role and "becoming part of volunteering".

I am sure that the new adverts will achieve their bottom line: more people aware of VCE and volunteering, but along the way if they are also making people who already volunteer realise just how important they are then that's one hell of a bonus.

Paul Wilson

