

Facilitator: Jim King (Co-facilitators in brackets)

Referral organisations attendance lists

24/2/09 (am) Addictions (Alistair Malloy and Alex Wilson)

Meg Wright	Glasgow Council on Alcohol
John Cameron	Phoenix Futures
Janice Gillespie	Whiteinch Project
Thomas Hall	Addaction Scotland
Robert Scullion	GEAAP
Catriona Sharp	Wayside Day Centre
David Bain	West Community Addictions Team
David Johnston	Milestone
Michelle Kirkwood	Simon Community
Michelle Neil	DRC Addiction Forum
Claire ?	South East Alternatives
Joan Currie	Scottish Drugs Forum
Henry Curran	New Horizons
Doug Ross	Momentum
Alistair Malloy	The Volunteer Centre
Alex Wilson	The Volunteer Centre

Non attendance but further info requested

Grace Gracie	Realise Community Project
Douglas Carnegie	North Community Health

24/2/09 (pm) Refugees & Asylum Seekers (Helen Taylor)

Alison Smith	Careers Scotland
Ellen McVey	Cranhill Community Project
Sam Paterson	Cranhill Community Project
Jenny Smith	North Glasgow Integration Network
Laura Dargie	Scottish Refugee Council
Beltus Etchu	Ethnic Enable
Janet Andrews	Maryhill Integration Network
Londi Beketch	Greater Pollok Integration Network
Robert Reid	SE CHCP Community Development
Paul Brogan	Employability Scotland
Helen Taylor	The Volunteer Centre

25/2/09 Mental Health/Disability (learning, physical, sensory) (Irene West)

George Clark	Enable Scotland
Eileen Ross	Mental Health Partnership NHSGGC
Tony Gover	Southwest Bridging Service
Cathryn Letham	Glasgow S. W. Regeneration Agency
Irene West	The Volunteer Centre

27/2/09 Young People (Derek Craig)

Hayley Hughes	Princes Trust
Kay Sheriden	Central College
Eileen Bell	Culture & Sport Glasgow
Alan Dick	Culture & Sport Glasgow
Cathy McPhail	Glasgow Vocational Programme (GCC)
Bharati Bundhoo	Culture & Sport Glasgow
Derek Craig	The Volunteer Centre

12/3/09 BME (exc. Refugees & Asylum Seekers) (Susan Knowles)

Kay Cherrie	Active Schools (GCC Ed.)
Naghat Ahmed	Glasgow Works
Cecilia Boccoch	GARA
Shabir Iqbal	GARA
Nyla Chung	Ethnic Minorities Law Centre
Susan Knowles	The Volunteer Centre

Former Equal Access area managers and Bridging Services contacts

Glasgow East Regen. Agency

- David Black

Glasgow North (Bridging Serv. coordinator)

- Carolyn Armstrong

Glasgow South East Regen. Agency

- Christine Jess

Glasgow West Regen. Agency

- Angie Black

Glasgow South West Regen. Agency

- Joanne Farrow

Engagement Network coordinators

Glasgow Comm. Planning - North

- Steven Dowling

Glasgow Comm. Planning - West

- Evelyn O'Donnell

Glasgow Comm. Planning - South East

- Claire Bynner

Glasgow Comm. Planning - South West

- Lawrence O'Neil

Glasgow East Regen Agency

- Danny Collins

What barriers prevent your service users from getting involved in volunteering?

Addictions agencies

- worries regarding benefits -
 - A general (usually wrong) perception that volunteering will affect benefits
 - concern that benefits will not cover childcare costs and claiming expenses may affect benefits
- Lack of variety for placement – most opportunities are in a social care context, with VIOs offering alternatives
- VIOs mindset is limiting - often displaying a stereotypical view of users
- Lack of definition of both ‘volunteering’ and ‘opportunity’ suggesting a need to be more pro-active in creating and describing opportunities
- Lack of confidence (in users) to take such a big step to ‘move on’. It requires changes in lifestyle and a widening social circle
- Often users’ time is governed by things outwith their control, i.e. accessing methadone scripts is generally scheduled by the pharmacist. VIOs offering opportunities rarely understand or take account of this
- Because of the above, users may incur additional travel costs that are unlikely to be reimbursed - a further disincentive
- Anecdotal evidence suggest that many users find it easy to talk themselves down - “People like me don’t volunteer” and “no-one would want the likes of me”

Refugees & Asylum Seekers

- Lack of appropriate, comprehensive publicity of the opportunities
- Many Refugees/AS would appreciate recognition (certificates, MV type awards) as it is culturally more widely comprehended and associated with status. A useful incentive.
- Expenses payments are an issue if they are not available ‘in advance’. This is mostly with regard to travel though childcare costs are prohibitive if the volunteer cannot recover them.
- Language – a barrier on so many levels.
 - VIOs make assumptions, in translating written information, that volunteers will be literate
 - Lack of ESOL classes
 - Grasping the concept of volunteering is difficult in some cultures
- Mismatching of volunteers to opportunities.
- Costs¹ of placing/managing refugees/AS are often misunderstood and overestimated.
- Reliability¹ – VIOs frequently assume that refugees/AS will be unreliable due to chaotic circumstances surrounding their status
- Disclosure¹ – many misconceptions with this, on both sides.
- There are also concerns regarding Disclosure and offender risk assessment/management. Typically, “How do we get a CR check from their home country?”

¹These are mostly unfounded misconceptions.

Mental Health

- Affects on benefits (again, usually a wrong perception)
- Losing Invalidity Benefit is a major concern (as above)
- As is JSA and the perceived limits for availability for work
- Seeking and taking advice from inappropriate sources, even GPs
- Disclosure, many people suspicious and put off by the idea of being 'checked'
- Many negative perceptions in VIOs (stereotypes) of people with MH background/issues
- Users often don't get past the 'risk management' part of a filtration process - "no mental health sufferers, we don't have the training/experience/time/etc. to cope with them"
- Volunteering as a route to employment can feel like pressure (perceptions of 'employability' as a concept itself are often challenging) and conversely -
- Those who need support may be stifled by 'traditionalists' in the care environment - not only their families, but also professionals
- With some potential volunteers, mental health problems go hand-in-hand with disabilities so they also have physical barriers to overcome
- Lack of support structures/mechanisms for people with learning difficulties beginning a placement
- Bureaucracy – many large public bodies (i.e. NHS) require referral to trade union bodies of plans for volunteering opportunities. This can be a positive thing but usually causes delays and is another layer of potential misunderstanding and stereotyping

Young People

- Lack of awareness among YP of the benefits of volunteering,
 - CV content
 - Confidence building
 - Social interaction
 - Gaining useful transferrable skills
- VIOs are not 'encouraging' enough for YP – assumptions made about commitment and interest that don't take account of lack of maturity
- There are often unnecessary obstacles that might be overcome by changes to structures – supervision/disclosure/slow bureaucracy
- Frequently, VIOs don't recognise the need for some YP to attend placements 'together' (mob handed or with a pal) as an informal support
- Induction processes can be intimidating
- Negative perceptions of YP (media driven?) can influence decisions to actively encourage them and/or to present opportunities in an appropriate way
- Regarding disclosure, statutory agencies are particularly slow to process and some volunteers are considered too young to be disclosed

BME

- Childcare difficulties featured as much here as in other groups, particularly around short term opportunities.
- Training programmes or structured induction into a VIO placement presents difficulties - not just with childcare, timing and venue for such events does not always encourage inclusivity.

- Lack of recognition regarding cultural differences - typically, in some communities, there is a potential conflict with a woman's 'role': carrying out the duties may be OK but travelling to the placement independently may not.
- Language differences were much the same as raised previously although there was further comment –
 - Communication based on direct translation (of information about both volunteering and particular opportunities) is not always enough. Format, culture and presentation must be considered for it to be effective
 - Translations can be counter-productive as people may be fluent in their home tongue but not literate despite becoming reasonably literate in English.
 - Staff responsible for training/induction are often insufficiently prepared to offer adequate support
 - Engaging with different generations within families and communities can create friction, particularly between YP and adults where the YP have a greater understanding of Scottish culture.

Are the right types of opportunities available?

Addictions agencies

- Broadly speaking, the answer was no.
- There would seem to be a paucity of VIOs which offer a good range of opportunities accessible to users - little scope for volunteers to progress within an organisation.
- What is generally available tends to be 'social care' related and centred within the context of addictions - wider skills/experience are rarely taken into account (by all parties), and users often feel uncomfortable or unaccepted outside 'social addiction' circles.
- Training could be useful for VIOs, and 'preparing to volunteer' training helpful for users.
- It is often the case that the end of a client's therapy and suitable placement availability don't coincide. Stakeholders might look at ways to make this come together as it could prove a vitally constructive development for people from this group. Where good communication is maintained between therapy providers and The Volunteer Centre, individuals have a much better experience in this area.
- Where possible, VIOs understanding and accommodating the role of 'mentor/befriender/named contact' within the placement can be an aid to a successful engagement.

Refugees & Asylum Seekers

- Again, the general consensus was that there are not enough appropriate opportunities. This is largely related to comments regarding the barriers.
- Participants reflected on the lack of less formal placements - 'I just want to help out when I can' summed up attitudes regarding the bureaucracy that R&ASs often find discouraging.
- This group also expressed disappointment about a lack of opportunities for volunteer led classes/tutoring, particularly with languages.
- The idea of 'preparing to volunteer' training was also thought to be useful.
- Activities within community based 'drop-in' centres was suggested as a suitable area for developing opportunities as this would satisfy the need for building social networks; gaining confidence; getting practice with English; and providing 'work experience'.

Mental Health

- Lack of placements was the experience here too.
- Comment was made regarding the differing perceptions of what volunteering is and what volunteers do. Such perceptions as held by both VIOs and clients.
- Need expressed for more 'taster' opportunities and short-term placements (particularly for work experience).
- Issues raised regarding how the CHCPs and Regen. agencies are working in partnership but in different ways. More commonality might lead to better provision.
- Formal/informal networking within agencies can provide better communication and dissemination regarding opportunities. Enable Scotland was cited as an example of good practice, their networking operates at ground level and filters up through the organisation.

Young People

- Generally the answer was 'no' again but discussion centred more on what was missing regarding types than on specific opportunities.
- Mention was made of using Myers Briggs type profiling. Where YP had been engaged with a 'matching' process they seemed more likely to retain their involvement.
- Intergenerational opportunities need to be promoted more effectively to YP.
- Placements could be described in ways that more effectively 'sell' the benefits.
- 'Taster opportunities' was suggested again.
- Stakeholder agencies should engage more with YP to elicit their views. "Ask YP what they want".
- There was a plea for placements that were 'other than sport'.

BME

Much of the discussion with this group reflected the comments made earlier, however

- It was suggested that people from BME communities tend to seek out opportunities in business/admin/research and there are very few of these.

Are the right types of support available?

Addictions agencies

- It was felt that there are supports to some extent, although more would be welcome.
- Most supports are external to the VIOs and this was a good thing as it was deemed inappropriate for employers to take this responsibility.
- Supports for placement agencies, while they do exist, are rare and this is an area that could be looked at.
- There was a suggestion for clear progression paths for placements through VIOs where a variety of opportunities is available. Whether mundane or challenging, clarity is more useful and attractive to clients.
- The Volunteer Centre might consider passing on contact details for referral agencies to VIOs as it is acknowledged that clients do not always disclose all they should. It would also help referrers to follow up with support and encouragement.
- Financial support is patchy and difficult to administer. An example given described a volunteer who did not have the initial expenses to get to a placement, and the VIO was only able to reimburse for engagement activity. Also, where reimbursement is only against provision of receipts there can be breaks in the system.

- VIOs could be more flexible with clients and perhaps find ways to accommodate mentors/befrienders/buddies.
- Addictions awareness training provision for VIO staff would be ideal. However, where this has existed, take up has been patchy.
- A range of suggestions were put forward that should rightly be a part of 'best practice' for VIOs in any context -
 - Peer support
 - Better 'meet & greet'
 - Encourage clients to feel part of the project
 - Rigorous support/supervision and review
 - Praise given appropriately and not neglected
 - A named contact for support
 - Volunteer information pack

Refugees & Asylum Seekers

- Once again, not enough of 'the right kind'. What constitutes the right kind support is largely dealt with under the 'barriers' section.
 - Translation services
 - Travel costs
 - Taster placements
 - Clear goal setting
 - Improving accessibility to website (particularly VC)
 - Childcare
 - Mentoring
 - Awards and events
 - Convey trust
 - Emphasis and clarity regarding boundaries in induction/training
- Volunteers from R&AS context can become 'overly attached' with new relationships and there is a need to recognise that both they and their support workers might require training to deal with the potential for becoming emotionally involved.
- There could be more done in preparing volunteers for moving on (to paid employment) with help writing applications and interview techniques

Mental Health

- The principal issue discussed (that was different to the other groups) was with regard to training of support staff. There was broad consensus that overcoming stereotypical views would open up volunteering to far more people who experienced mental health difficulties.

Young People

- There was a widely expressed need for VIOs that place YP to consider 'exit strategies' as a standard part of their procedure. YP would find it easier to engage if there was clarity regarding 'what happens next or after?'
- More exchanging of information between agencies could open up opportunities for expanding options - other things to do than sport.
- VIOs could think about accommodating the possibility of a YP wishing to bring in a 'buddy' or informal supporter initially, and how this might be facilitated or even promoted as a benefit.

- VIOs also need to take account of possible concerns, within the YP's family, about their involvement.

BME

- Much of what was discussed in this group echoed the discussion in other groups, however –
- Specific training was suggested as needing to be part of good support. Particularly mentioned was training in English, confidence building and cultural awareness (Scottish context).

Equal Access area managers & Engagement Network coordinators

Attempts to engage with groups through these structures proved difficult². With some exceptions, the response to our request for meetings was negative, the view being that this was a very busy time of year for their members and 'various other consultations' had invited their involvement. Most were happy to accept a questionnaire for distribution to their membership and offered to encourage replies. One response has, so far (3rd April), been received from a member of the West CRG. See note³ below.

One group (facilitated by South East CPL) agreed to attend a meeting on the evening of 31st March. Key points from this meeting are noted³ below.

General Suggestions

Some themes kept recurring throughout the discussions, intended as helpful suggestions to aid progress.

Training for potential volunteers to prepare them and help them understand what volunteering is in terms of culture, context and benefit was widely recognised as a need to be fulfilled.

VIO personnel, who have responsibility for recruitment and management of volunteers, could benefit from specific training in understanding various extra support needs that volunteers may have.

Issues regarding alternative childcare (or respite for carers) need to be addressed. If the SVF is a serious attempt to open volunteering to more people, it has to acknowledge that the current position largely excludes parents (particularly single parents) and carers.

Better ways must be sought to promote volunteering. This includes developing language/terminology that is jargon free but communicates the benefits and the expectations universally.

²Initial emails sent in mid January 2009 were followed up in February and early March. Follow up communications to the CRGs (by JK 3rd Mar) led to South East CRG proceeding with a meeting 31st Mar.

West CRG attempted (unsuccessfully) to arrange a meeting but accepted questionnaires for distribution to members.

The other areas could not find a suitable time to arrange meetings but agreed to distribute questionnaires to members.

Follow ups to LRAs/Bridging Services by JK (3rd Mar) elicited no replies from East, West, and South West and despite attempts, North were unable to arrange any meetings with groups or individuals. Questionnaires were sent to North.

³ Attendance list for 31st March S.E. CRG members meeting:

Angus Quin	Community Councillor and resident
Patricia Ingram	Gorbals Community Forum and resident
Emilie Devlin	Resident
Claire McAteer	Resident
Anne Strachan	Resident

West CRG Member questionnaire respondent

Ann Laird

What is the relative importance of different barriers to volunteering in your area?

S.E. CRG Members

- Several of the respondents had experience of community project governance and they felt that many of the barriers they had faced were created by 'professionals' from agencies that should have been supporting them. many anecdotes/stories were shared about difficulties with OSCR, The Care Commission, GCC - Community Planning, Regeneration, and sometimes elected representatives.

As volunteers they felt undervalued, patronised and marginalised.

- The Disclosure process was also raised with similar comments to those stated in other groups
- It was felt that 'Community Planning' frequently displays unrealistic expectations concerning resources for community projects, particularly with regard to the workload on committee members and activists.
- Some respondents suggested that 'knowing the right person' (or not) was still prevalent as a barrier to involvement. One person recalled being told that they had to 'learn to play the game' to be accepted into the right clique.
- Insufficient (inadequate) procedures are applied to minimise 'empire builders' (local, volunteer activists) gaining positions of influence.
- There was a strongly expressed feeling that, currently and in recent times, volunteers are just there to fill the gaps that are left by inadequate staff levels. Some stated that their involvement was only valued as a way for appropriate boxes to be ticked so that funding and strategic plans could be developed.
- Changes (political etc.) in Local Authority policies and structures have a devastating impact on volunteer community groups.
- Greater clarity is needed regarding the language of volunteering – the word itself is perceived in so many ways as to cause confusion. Most people just thought of themselves as 'helping out'. As a result, they found 'formal' volunteering much too bureaucratic.

West CRG respondent

- People may not know what formal volunteering opportunities are available or where to find out.
- People don't know what a fulfilling and enjoyable experience formal volunteering often is.
- Most people are already very busy with their paid jobs, looking after their families, social activities etc.
- There needs to be a certain level of organisation in place before volunteering opportunities can be offered.
- Liability Insurance may be an issue.
- All kinds of other legal worries have crept into the scene in recent years, e.g. potential false accusations of abuse, child protection issues, data protection, health and safety, etc.
- Social Work does some of this stuff, and people may think there is therefore a lesser role, or no role, for them.

S.E. CRG Members

What types of informal volunteering are people engaged in and how significant are they in your area?

- Mostly, this is just people helping out their neighbours and families. Things like childcare, supporting older or frail people featured in the discussion. There was some reticence to see these 'services' becoming formalised as the bureaucracy would probably scare people off. There was no real information regarding the scale of this.

West CRG respondent

- Thinking here of neighbours helping others in the community, one big problem in the West End is that many folks don't really get to know their neighbours.
- Actually, I think that once they do, there is a real chance of informal volunteering taking place, but I don't think there's a huge amount of informal volunteering now on a regular basis – there is *some*.
- Modes of informal volunteering are actually a big question, and some big answers are needed, to do with the way that both private housing and social housing, residential buildings and external areas are designed and maintained, the way that the people see the "street" and the "community", etc.

S.E. CRG Members

Why have people stopped volunteering in previous roles?

- This question raised the significance of 'being/feeling undervalued' barrier mentioned earlier. Not only was this a disincentive for those who did volunteer, but their family members and acquaintances were equally discouraged from volunteer involvement. People being seen as 'suffering' in a volunteer role, is not a good promotional message.
- An example was cited of a disciplined and sacked staff member spreading negative gossip about a project. Part of the gossip led to an investigation by the Charities Commission which was drawn out and protracted. Despite finding no evidence to justify the complaints, the Commission investigator would not allow a statement to be made by the project that it had been cleared of wrongdoing. "We can only say that we found no evidence, not that nothing was wrong".

- There was a strongly held view that agencies which should be providing support were/are too often more concerned with protecting themselves from litigation possibilities than supporting volunteers.
- Some felt that volunteers who take on major, governance responsibilities in community projects are falling foul of a tendency towards greater 'professionalisation' of their roles and, for instance, demands from funders that volunteers are not 'sufficiently qualified' to submit applications etc.

West CRG Respondent

- Something else happens in their life to stop them, or they have simply done enough volunteering.
- Simply, the increase of any of the barriers mentioned above, to a sufficient extent to become insuperable for an individual.