



# The Magazine of Grampian Opportunities

Issue Fourteen

Grampian **Opportunities**  
*Finding the way forward*



## Railway Taxi Drivers Are Not Put Off By Disability...

It is important to challenge bad practice - but equally if not more important, is the need to highlight good practice and take the time to say thank you when an individual delivers a good service...



Some of us are aware of and have come to expect as part of the norm that a few taxi drivers have given the Aberdeen train station taxi rank a bad reputation, by saying they are exempt or just point blankly refusing wheelchair user customers, with many different excuses that we have come to know and laugh through or get frustrated at.

Recently, I got off the train and went to get a taxi. I asked one driver if he could take me and he got out - but sadly his seats wouldn't go down. Instead of leaving me to find another taxi however, he called over his friend to see if he could help. At this point the rain was pouring down heavily and I was getting soaked so a female driver ran over with her umbrella. The two gentlemen tried to solve the issue, and asked another driver if he could take me home. The first driver came over to apologies and promised to get his car fixed.

This highlighted to me that the Aberdeen station taxi rank has been getting a bad name for a long time due to a few drivers who don't want to show good will and do their job properly. Most taxi drivers show good will, work as part of their team to get the best result and they do care about their customers. I really want to express my thanks to those drivers that help me, you have given me faith in the taxi rank once again.

## Aberdeen Journals Team-building Day at GO

A team of seven from the Marketing Team at Aberdeen Journals rose to the challenge to help us look at how to make the best use of our kitchen space. They cleared away surplus equipment and made a start on painting walls and doors.

Thanks to the team for their hard work. The final make over touch was to add a tablecloth and vase of flowers.



Thank you

## **Congratulations and Welcome**

Best wishes to Gladys who has started working with WRVS Aberdeenshire Community Services. Gladys was a regular volunteer with the GO newsletter team and her leaving led us to draw up a wanted poster to promote the opportunity for others to join the GO news group. We at GO felt that we needed to show that there are still good services and people out there who are willing to care.

A big welcome to Marie who has already risen to this challenge in time to help set up this Autumn newsletter. We hope you enjoy this issue of the GO newsletter.



### **Volunteers Wanted**

Grampian Opportunities newsletter team are looking for new members to join the existing group. We meet every Tuesday between 2-4pm at the Grampian Opportunities office in Inverurie.

Tasks involved are:

1. collecting articles for the newsletter.
2. typing up stories
3. attending meetings and training days
4. ability to work with a small team
5. "making tea for the editor" ... (now who said that!)
6. giving up 2 hours of your time each week
7. writing your own articles.

Grampian Opportunities works to promote opportunities for disabled people and people with mental health problems. This vacancy at the news team is YOUR opportunity to take part in a fun and relaxed atmosphere to help spread the news about GO and its activities in helping others gain information to help their lives.

For more information contact James or Edwina at Grampian Opportunities

Tel: 01467 629675 Email: [go.news@grampianopportunities.org.uk](mailto:go.news@grampianopportunities.org.uk)



## **Mentoring News**

### **Volunteering Opportunities**

Potential volunteer mentors took part in a Mentor Induction Session, followed by our Basic Mentor Training which was run over three days in June. The training was delivered by a small team of volunteer mentors and our mentoring coordinators. From the training we now have several new fully trained volunteer mentors to add to our mentoring Team, raising the number of our approved volunteer mentors to 32 individuals who bring a wide variety of skills and experience.

Our mentors are welcome to attend regular Mentor Support Group Meetings. Beginning in October, these will now be held once every 2 months. It is hoped that the alternative months will give us the opportunity to discuss topics or offer further training as part of volunteers' on-going personal development.

COME and speak to us if you would like to know more about mentoring:

Tricia Mclean and Katrina Wilson, Mentoring Co-ordinators

01467 629675 or e-mail [go.mentor@grampianopportunities.org.uk](mailto:go.mentor@grampianopportunities.org.uk)

## GO SIGNPOSTING TRAINING

**AIMS:** To introduce volunteer sign-posters to basic listening skills and rapport building using the 5 stage interview process and developing researching and information skills.

### OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Introduction to GO Signposting Service (including role)
- 2) Introduce 5 stage Interview Process. Discuss and define Stage Interview process
  - a) Stage 1 – Establish Rapport
  - b) Stage 2 – Identify Issue
  - c) Stage 3 – Imparting Information
  - d) Stage 4 – Decision Making
  - e) Stage 5 – Ending Signposting Interview/Next Steps
- 3) Developing practical signposting skills including research, information and networking skills
- 4) Exploring benefits of signposting

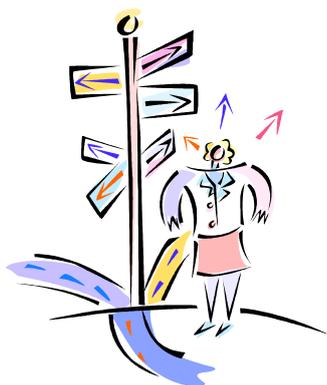
**DURATION:** One group session followed by individual practical sessions and a further group information workshop.

**ASSESSMENT:** During the training period, an individual will be matched with an experienced sign-poster. There will be an opportunity to shadow this person (mentor) in an interview until you feel comfortable to lead an interview. When this happens, your mentor will shadow you and help you to reflect on your signposting skills development. Timescales will be based on individual requirements. All situations/scenarios used during the GO Signposting training will be based upon real-life referrals and it is hoped that we will be able to have genuine referrals to help with skills development during practice sessions.

**TRAINING VENUE:** Training delivered within an informal community venue which is fully accessible. This venue is sited on or close to a main road.

**RESOURCES:** Signposting Interview Skills pack developed with kind permission from Signposting Aberdeenshire project.

**COST:** The cost of the training to the participants is nothing as the training is supported by the Big Lottery Fund. Grampian Opportunities (GO) cover all travel expenses and provide refreshments. GO will also cover any out-of-pocket expenses that would otherwise prevent someone from participating.



### GO SIGNPOSTING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

Following training, there will be a training review interview to discuss the GO Signposting training and volunteering opportunity. Upon satisfactory completion of the training, there will be an opportunity to provide GO signposting for real to new and current referrals at GO.

To get involved Call Tricia or Katrina Tel 01467 629675



## LET'S GET POSITIVE ABOUT THE NEGATIVE

Stress halts or slows down the body's normal functions. Suddenly life seems tired and less happy than it should.

Let's call it "the blues" – but there are ways to get happy and regain a positive outlook by taking the following steps:

1. Eat well and regularly
2. Sleep well
3. Be active
4. Learn to relax
5. Talking
6. Positive thinking

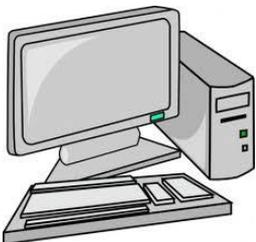
For more information go to: [www.stepsforstress.org](http://www.stepsforstress.org)

### Information Highway Technology!!!

... 'I forget to remember to forget'

In this digital age, where huge amounts of information are stored and presented to us, the human brain is being overworked!

We are confronted with more details in newspapers, magazines and pullouts; on radio and television; and now with the every accessible internet, and iPhones, etc than our ancestors had in their lifetime.



Take the internet for an example; it has more information than we know ourselves. From social networks, to using our credit cards to purchase items, to researching topics, to watching television, chatting, and uploading pictures or music, etc. It begs the question, "how valuable is this information and how should the brain forget it"?

The digital age does not allow us to forget and be human: A love letter can be sent and forgotten, but digitally it is stored and can be used against us - in the present and not consigned to the past as a memory. A memory is supposed to help us remember important events; however the availability of information is devaluing our memories. We have become overcome by pointless and useless data, which may in turn discharge important information that we may hold dear.

The digital information super highway is a two way street, however in truth it can end up in a cul-de-sac. The digital era does not forget, humans do forget and forgive thank heavens. I do not want to be reminded about 1970 when streaking was all the rage. Please forget I said that and press delete.

Elvis

## THE TRUE MEANING OF SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORT

The term self-directed support in its simplest definition should simply mean a person, their relatives, friends and wider support network determining the direction of their life.

At present there is an illusion that in order to direct their own support people must be able to be an employer, an accountant, have an understanding of employment law, health and safety and Human Resource issues - after dealing with all this there appears little time for living life.

Society doesn't usually expect young people to leave school and become a chief executive in a company right away - but it expects disabled people to either accept the basics from local authorities or go it alone and turn their home and life into a small business.

***If people could become apprentices in independent living maybe there would be a higher uptake in direct payments and individual budgets.***

It is apparent that many local authorities underestimate disabled people's desire to direct their own lives, with support from others - a right which seems to have been overwritten within a culture of eligibility criteria and risk assessment. People have become conditioned to a fear of taking risks, and this is perhaps why it can be easier to cope with disability as a child, as one has as not yet learned the feeling of fear. On the same point, services need to be joined up, to allow for a smoother transition from children's to adult services.

The minute people do not fit society's 'norms' is the same minute they are treated differently and thought almost unfit to equal citizenship. Systems that control people, rather than support their very existence de-personalise people. If people had control over directing their lives, resources would be used more effectively as people are the best judge of their own goals and life plan. Even people with profound, complex learning disabilities have ways of communicating with those around them and thus have a way of directing their own lives.



### ***Personalisation:***

*"It enables the individual alone, or in groups, to find the right solutions for them and to participate in the delivery of a service. From being a recipient of services, citizens can become actively involved in selecting and shaping the services they receive."*

*This means there is a need to change the way the social care system operates (so that the services meet the needs of the person, rather than the person having to "fit in" to suit the service).*

## What Andy looks for in a carer...

The first step to employing your own staff is to be clear about what you need support with, whether it is support with personal, domestic, social or administrative/financial tasks.

### **The qualities I am looking for in a support worker are:**

Reliability, Punctuality, Physically fit to support me, Good cooking skills, Ability to work on their own initiative, Honesty and trustworthy, Good housekeeping skills, Listening Skills, Good communication skills, Driver (optional), Sympathetic and understanding. Someone who can help me develop my goals and wishes and supports me to achieve them.

**Before you interview**, it is important to think about the type of person you want eg: someone with common interests, practical skills, flexibility and give some thought to whether you are looking for a man or a woman - sometimes it may not matter but for some personal tasks you may have a preference.

**Arranging your own care** is not without its own challenges. I recommend regular planning groups, clear rules on confidentiality and an understanding of boundaries. The carer needs to accept the disabled persons need for space. It isn't always possible for someone in their own home to be happy and cheerful.

### **WHAT HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE?**

- Some carers have not been reliable but in general carers timekeeping has been good.
- Staff not informing me that they are not available for their allotted shifts. I have been left without support when a worker has not turned up.
- Some carers are unwilling to listen to my needs and wishes. Sometimes they think they know what is best for me.
- Not all carers have been good cooks, which is important to me as it is one of my pleasures

#### **Plus side:**

- Able to choose my own carers.
- Continuity of care.
- Get to know carer and carer gets to know you.
- Carers more flexible than agency carers, gives me more choice.
- Agencies have their own rules and restrictions.
- With my own carers I know who is coming in.

#### **Minus side:**

- Employment law - knowing the legislation.
- Staff can take advantage
- Can be very difficult to arrange relief cover, especially at short notice.

### **Looking to employ a carer?**

Employing your own carer is not without challenges but there is help there. Aberdeenshire Council contract with Cornerstone Direct Payment Service to provide this support. Further information about their service is available:



Website: [www.dps.cornerstone.org.uk](http://www.dps.cornerstone.org.uk)

Tel: 01224 256053

Email: [directpayments@cornerstone.org.uk](mailto:directpayments@cornerstone.org.uk)



## WEA Skills Plus Core Skills Workshops

WEA provides adult learning courses which help people gain confidence and core skills for the workplace. During July and August several members of GO and one member from

Comraich took part in a Core Skills training course. During our

3 day training course we learned about communication skills, listening to what others are saying, how we talk to each other, our tone either by voice, letter, email, or telephone; and how we work with each other as part of a team by talking, listening and sharing ideas. We also did some of the training by doing some fun activities and games as part of the team building activities.

The follow up session was a group session where members were assessed putting into practice lessons learned at the Core Skills Plus training. All of the group members thoroughly enjoyed the 3 training sessions and found it to be a very useful and interesting opportunity to learn new skills.



## Youth Opportunity Database Aberdeenshire (YODA)

[www.aberdeenshire.youthinfo.info](http://www.aberdeenshire.youthinfo.info)

On June 15<sup>th</sup> a number of Grampian Opportunities volunteers and two members from Comraich attended a Y.O.D.A. training course. This is an information website aimed at young people aged 15 - 24 which will help them to get into further learning and/or employment. Y.O.D.A. gives young people more choices when leaving school and more chances to achieve personal goals. All participants enjoyed the training day and building on feedback from the training a number of changes have been made to the website to make it more accessible. Plans are now in place to set up an employment section and Grampian Opportunities is keen to work with others to raise awareness of employment support for disabled people.

Further details: Tel: Pamela 01779 483 154 Email: [yoda@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:yoda@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

## G-Mail

Congratulations to the eight GO members who successfully completed a G-MAIL training session on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2011. This training was delivered by BITES (Buchan IT E-learning Service). A follow us session is planned to help set up a Facebook presence for GO. More information about the training delivered by BITES is on their website [www.bitesonline.org](http://www.bitesonline.org).

Pictured with certificates: Tricia, Heather and Angie.



## Consultation on Independent Living

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of June Grampian Opportunities hosted an open day for local disabled people to enable them to express their feeling on independent living by exploring areas such as housing, moving house and care, advocacy, and communication.

This local event, facilitated by Maurice Parkin, GO volunteer and Board member enabled us to gather the views, experiences and feelings of GO volunteers, so that our two representatives, Emma and Edwina, could take that information down to Perth to the event ODS were hosting.



### Perth Trip - ODS Consulting

At 8am, Emma and Eddy met each other at Aberdeen train station. It was a very early start for us. The staffs were very helpful at Aberdeen station and the journey went very fast due to us chatting all the way.

Once at Perth we were met by a really friendly taxi driver who took us to the venue where we were met by Tara from ODS. Even though Emma had met her a few times before Eddy's welcome was just as warm and because of this we didn't feel we needed each other for support to do the group sessions, and that meant GO was represented in all the groups and we both learnt more. For our first groups of the day, Eddy was in Advocacy and Emma was in Moving Home and Care.

The facilitators kept to strict time management which must have been hard as people wanted to share experiences and feelings. In each group they used different methods to gather information. Methods were a map, river and cake.



We both liked how they asked us what we wanted in an ideal world, than asked about the barriers, and then what should we do to improve these things. This approach gave a positive outlook and the cake method gave us an easy way to prioritise issues to feed back to the Scottish Government, and it was a great way to end the day.



We learned that the issues discussed are the same all over Scotland and they are affecting everyone and their communities. As representatives it helped us that we had the information from the local workshop, as it gave us more knowledge and evidence, to share. ODS Consulting have reported back to the Scottish government on the issues, challenges and feelings of disabled people.

## Telephone Conferencing

A number of staff and volunteers have been involved in telephone conferencing. Their last meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2011 served as an overall review of previous meetings.

Items discussed were:

1. How things are.
2. Have we got it right
3. What changes/ actions needed?
4. Review.



The discussion was overwhelmingly positive about the benefits of telephone conferencing. Everyone had the opportunity to participate and comment.

Telephone conferencing is still being developed by the delivery team who remain open to improvements in delivering the service. Overall, the calls were a success and provided a forum to discuss issues. During bad weather this service will be a vital tool for GO members.

## Crathie Opportunity Holidays



Crathie Opportunity holidays are a registered charity that offer short breaks at their four disabled friendly cottages situated in the heart of the Cairngorms National Park. They aim to surprise and delight its guests not only with the high standard of design and quality of furnishings and equipment but also the sincere commitment of staff to their guests' comfort and care.

On Saturday the 16th July they had an open day to allow potential guests to see what Crathie Opportunity holidays had to offer. Bill, Allan and Jean Marie went to the open day as representatives of Grampian Opportunities short breaks research group. We were all very impressed by what we saw and by the staff we met and we feel it is a perfect place for a short break.

On the open day there was a prize draw with the chance to win a three day holiday and we all entered the draw. We were unsuccessful - however the prize was won by Mr Michael Talbott from Braemar who asked Crathie Opportunity holidays manager Maggie MacAlpine to donate the prize to someone who would benefit from a short break. Maggie contacted us and we were delighted to accept this kind and generous gift. Grampian Opportunities intend to use this gift around October by having a group break where we will continue working on our short break project.

### Short Break Research and Inspiring Breaks

The Short breaks team have been working with Shared Care Scotland, who have recently launched a report on their Inspiring Breaks events. Members of GO helped facilitate events in Dundee and Inverurie.

The research team have also visited a range of hotels and very sheltered housing respite flats to gather information for their guide to short breaks.

More information from [shortbreaks@grampianopportunities.org.uk](mailto:shortbreaks@grampianopportunities.org.uk)

Inspiring  
Breaks



My break planner

SHARED CARE  
SCOTLAND

LTCAS  
LIFE TIME CARE AND SUPPORT  
FOR PEOPLE WITH  
LEARNING DIFFICULTIES  
people and parents



## INVERURIE COMMUNITY KITCHEN

The new Inverurie Community kitchen is expected to be completed by mid November 2011. Plans had recently gone to tender and the bid accepted is within budget. It is understood that the build will include work to allow easier access to the wheelchair accessible toilet facilities. The cost agreed will also include cookers but not white goods.

The current group are now looking for representative of user groups or individual members to join a management group to support the use of the Community Kitchen

### COUSCOUS SALAD

#### Couscous

1.  $\frac{1}{2}$  a cup of couscous in a bowl.
2. 1. Cup boiling water added to bowl.
3. Season with salt and herbs.
4. Cover and leave for 5 minutes.
5. Fork over and serve.



#### SALAD

1. Chop spring onion, tomato, Lettuce.
2. Add half a tin of kidney beans.
3. Leave for 10 minutes
4. Combine all ingredients into one complete quick nutritious light autumn dish.
5. Non Vegetarians add cold meats - omit beans.

### LAUNCH OF GO HOBBY TIME



Thanks to a start up grant from the Acorn Centre. The first hobby group was held at J.G. Ross's meeting room in Inverurie on 6<sup>th</sup> July.

The morning session was a "Stamping demonstration" by Barbara Lamb, followed by a card making session led by Phyllis Gordon.

Plans are now in place to hold regular classes to promote hobby activities in a social and supportive setting. The aim of the group is to build skills and self-confidence, share interests and relax. If you have skills to share or interested in taking part then contact Phyllis: Tel 01467 629675 or email [go.events@grampianopportunities.org.uk](mailto:go.events@grampianopportunities.org.uk)



- A place where you will be able to find information on events and services in Aberdeen with an emphasis on inclusion
- Making your community a better place
- A place for services to work together to create more opportunities for inclusion

Email [info@thehub.org](mailto:info@thehub.org) or call 07831373530 for more information

**Other Sources of Information:**

NHS inform ---- 0800 22 44 88 (8am-10pm) [www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk)

Grampian care data --- 01651 872727 [www.grampiancaredata.gov.uk](http://www.grampiancaredata.gov.uk)

**FOR CARERS:**

Carers support worker (ARI Information Point) 01224 646677 [www.vsa.org.uk/carers](http://www.vsa.org.uk/carers)

Carers Support Services Mental Health--- 01224 557868



**CHARITY FIREWALK**

North East Sensory Services are organising a sponsored Firewalk on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> September at Garioch Sports Centre.

NESS are inviting other voluntary groups to purchase places at £60 per place with the understanding that they must also charge £100 minimum sponsorship to each of their Firewalkers. If you are interested contact: Neil Skene Tel: 0845 27 12345 Email: [neil.skene@nesensoryservices.org](mailto:neil.skene@nesensoryservices.org)

**COUNTDOWN TO THE OLYMPICS AND PARA-OLYMPICS**

August 29<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> September 2012

There are 20 Para Olympic sports and GO would love to hear from readers about their involvement in any of the Olympic events. GO supports the Olympic ideals to inspire change in the way people think, feel and behave.

Tel: 01467 629675 or email [go.news@grampianopportunities.org.uk](mailto:go.news@grampianopportunities.org.uk)

**ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL LEISURE FACILITIES & SPORTS PROGRAMMES CONCESSIONARY ACCESS SCHEME**

Concessions are available to many people and carers in receipt of some government benefits. You can get reduced fees, and sometimes free access to Aberdeenshire Leisure centres. Why not get involved yourself. For details contact the leisure admin office: 01467 628283.

## Future Learning Opportunities

- 13 Sept. LTCAS event - Edinburgh
- 14 Sept. FACEBOOK Workshop
- 21 Sept. Community Researching, Signposting
- 21 Sept. Service User Involvement in Social Work  
Student Induction
- 22 Sept. RGU Fresher Fayre – recruiting volunteer mentors
- 27 Sept. OTBS event - Edinburgh
- 4 Oct. Mentoring Network Meeting - Elgin
- 4 Nov. Scottish Mentoring Network Annual meeting & awards – Glasgow.



Websites	
Grampian Opportunities	<a href="http://www.grampianopportunities.org.uk">www.grampianopportunities.org.uk</a>
Steps for Stress	<a href="http://www.stepsforstress.org">www.stepsforstress.org</a>
Self-Directed Support	<a href="http://www.selfdirectedsupportscotland.org.uk">www.selfdirectedsupportscotland.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.sdsscotland.org.uk">www.sdsscotland.org.uk</a>
Direct Payment Service Cornerstone	<a href="http://www.dps.cornerstone.org.uk">www.dps.cornerstone.org.uk</a>
Community Planning	<a href="http://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk">www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk</a>
WEA	<a href="http://www.wea.org.uk">www.wea.org.uk</a>
Community Networks	<a href="http://www.community-network.org">www.community-network.org</a>
Y.O.D.A.	<a href="http://www.aberdeenshire.youthinfo.info">www.aberdeenshire.youthinfo.info</a>
BITES	<a href="http://www.bitesonline.org">www.bitesonline.org</a>
NESS	<a href="http://www.nesensoryservices.org">www.nesensoryservices.org</a>
Crathie Opportunity	<a href="http://www.crathieholidays.org.uk">www.crathieholidays.org.uk</a>
Shared Care Scotland	<a href="http://www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk">www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk</a>
The Hub	<a href="http://www.theinfohub.org">www.theinfohub.org</a>
NHS Inform	<a href="http://www.nhsinform.co.uk">www.nhsinform.co.uk</a>
CareData	<a href="http://www.grampiancaredata.gov.uk">www.grampiancaredata.gov.uk</a>
VSA Carers support	<a href="http://www.vsa.org.uk/carers">www.vsa.org.uk/carers</a>

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