



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

## Activity Report

**July 2010 – 30 June 2011**

Job creation and assisting people into work is fundamental to the work of Grampian Opportunities which aims to help disabled people and people with mental health problems access the information and support they need to take up and progress in further education, volunteering opportunities and employment.

Grampian Opportunities will support individuals who have a personal goal that will further their employment prospects and groups or organisations that have both the idea and commitment to develop a project or enterprise which will promote employability or open up employment and volunteering opportunities.

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## Grampian Employment Opportunities

Grampian Employment Opportunities Limited (operating as Grampian Opportunities) is a company limited by guarantee (company number: SC208239) and is recognised as a charity by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (charity number: SC030396). The charitable company is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association

## History and background

Grampian Employment Trust was formed in 2000. Two years later, the Company joined with Working Alternatives Limited (operating as Opportunities Unlimited) to form the present organisation, which was renamed Grampian Employment Opportunities Ltd. in 2003 and recognised as a Scottish Charity from 19 March 2003.

## Vision

Our vision is a fully inclusive community where everyone has equality of opportunity with support to take up, retain and progress in learning, volunteering and employment.

## Mission statement

Job creation and assisting people into work is fundamental to the work of Grampian Opportunities which aims to help disabled people and people with mental health problems access the information and support they need to take up and progress in further education, volunteering opportunities and employment.

Grampian Opportunities will support individuals who have a personal goal that will further their employment prospects and groups or organisations that have both the idea and commitment to develop a project or enterprise which will promote employability or open up employment and volunteering opportunities.

We recognised that not everyone is able or wants to be in paid employment but almost all want to “work” that is to be engaged in some kind of valued activity that uses their skills and facilitates social inclusion.

## Area of operation

The registered office is based at 1 High Street, Inverurie. The organisation currently focuses its activity in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City but can also operate in Moray.

To support our work in Aberdeen, we shared an office in with Future Choices from October 2009 – October 2010. The decision at that time was to give up the annual rental and move to booking meeting space in Aberdeen on an as required basis. This gives more flexibility and a choice of accessible venues has been identified.

## Equality of Opportunity statement

GO is committed to promoting an environment of equality of opportunity. There is also a commitment to reducing, the stigma and disadvantage, which surrounds disability and mental health problems. We promote good practice and challenge areas where change or improvement is needed.

## Management structure

A board of directors of up to eight members meet at least four times a year to administer the charity. The board has delegated the day to day operations to its Senior Development Worker.

The Directors of the charitable company are its trustees for the purpose of charity law. The Directors during the year to 30 June 2011 are listed below:

### Board membership

- Sandy Murray (chair)
- Alisdair Chisholm
- Martin Van der Lee
- Maurice Parkin

### Staff

- Linda Singer, Development worker from 1 December 2003.
- Michael Wright, Support Assistant from 31 January 2007.
- Tricia Mclean, Mentoring coordinator from July 2009.
- Katrina Wilson, Mentoring Coordinator from October 2009.
- Heather Morrell, Admin Worker from November 2009.
- Phyllis Gordon, Admin support from November 2010.
- Emma Rennie, Admin support from December 2010.

### Support to board members and staff

- Gary Walker and Elaine Wallace (Tenants First Housing Co-operative finance support)

### Volunteers

Grampian Opportunities aims to fully involve disabled people and people with mental health problems in the planning, managing and delivery of our services. Opportunities exist within GO to participate as committee members, to be involved in short term working groups or contribute to the organisation and its projects. This year saw a further growth in the number of volunteers involved in supporting the work of the organisation.

Volunteers are involved in all office activities and several have taken up lead roles on a range of in-house activities such as coordinating events, developing the website and producing a newsletter. Volunteers lead on a range of projects which have grown from our "Voices for Change" activity. This includes exploring short break options; researching accessible meeting places in the Garioch area and representing GO on an Independent Living Initiative Steering group. Volunteers support the planning and delivery of the New Explorations Mentoring service, and during the first two years of the service over 30 individuals have been approved as mentors.

## Membership

GO membership is open to Individuals and organisations with an interest in promoting enterprise and employment opportunities for disabled people and people with mental health problems.

## Current Activities (achievements and performance)

### Achievements 2010/11:

#### 1. GO Volunteering Opportunities

- During the year GO had **39 active volunteers**, including four volunteer directors. There is also a waiting list for people who have expressed an interest in volunteering.
- GO is now registered with the **PVG membership** scheme to request checks on volunteers who may be working with vulnerable adults.
- During the year one volunteer achieved an MV award for contributing over 200hours. The **MV Award Scheme** is open to all volunteers between the ages of 16 and 25 and aims to help recognise the contribution they make in their local area
- In March 2011, almost 40 people attended our annual planning day, where staff and volunteers shared information on our activities. The focus for the day was the New Explorations mentoring service. Participants on the day had the opportunity to take part in a mentoring speed-matching event and hear about the Scottish Mentoring Network

#### 2. GO Support to individuals and organisations

**Employability** → Grampian Opportunities primarily operates at the early stages of the employability pathway. During the year we have been able to extend the opportunity for two volunteers to join our staff team - one on a session basis (2.5 Hours per week), and the other working 16 hours per week. Another two members returned to work, one secured additional work, one progressed in the workplace and started SVQ work based training, one completed a work preparation course with the Café Academy and progressed onto part time employment, one secured occasional work as a sports coach, one has taken up a volunteer work placement in a commercial business, and three individuals who had low level contact with GO secured employment, but for two of these the employment was short term and they are still seeking paid employment.

##### *examples*

A volunteer supported by a mentor, visited the RNIB training centre in Edinburgh. Further work with the local RNIB employment services secured Future Jobs Funding which enabled Grampian Opportunities to offer paid work to one of our volunteers. This was on a trial basis, initially for six months but led to permanent paid position.

**References** → Volunteering can act as a step back into employment and we have provided references for volunteers, enabling them to take up training, volunteering opportunities or paid employment. References have also been provided for volunteer involving organisations which provide services to disabled people, enabling them to secure grant funding.

**Funding searches** → GO continues to support organisations and individuals' research funding options. One volunteer developed a referral form for funding searches which can now be found on our website. In addition to this, GO has a section on our website where people can access application forms and guidelines for Craigmyle Community Limited.

**Developing skills and confidence** → Participating in planning meetings, producing written reports, writing a newsletter, event coordination, project activity, learning and networking activities linked to the work of Grampian Opportunities have given volunteers

considerable opportunities to use existing skills, learn new skills and build “confidence by doing”.

### **Learning Opportunities →**

Staff and volunteers from GO attended over 40 events and different training activities (240+ sessions)

- One member of staff completed the first part of A+ course and with the support of a volunteer, continues to use these skills to maintain our ICT equipment.
- Four staff participated in Befriending Network Scotland’s Vital Skills training.
- Three GO members participated in Speak UP Speak Out training in November
- One member of staff and a volunteer participated in Fundraising training
- Grampian Opportunities delivered a Confidence to GO course for 10 individuals
- GO coordinated YODA training in March for 8 members and two representatives of Comraich
- Portfolio activity has been a key development this year, starting with an event about Portfolio’s in November combined with a presentation on volunteering from VC Aberdeenshire. This event was attended by 19 members. One volunteer secured an SVQ for core skills at level 4 and a follow up programme of meetings have been held to support the use of personal portfolio’s.
- 13 members attended WEA Skills Plus core skills training and are working towards accreditation of core skills
- Basic Mentor training in October/November was led by volunteers.
- Community Networks Training.

**Signposting and Information →** During the year GO has continued to respond to requests from individuals and organisations for information on local services. GO has also attended shared information at events arranged by VC Aberdeenshire, VSA Carers service, Aberdeen University, Community Planning Partnership and have hosted visits by individuals, WEA students, and Pupils from Alford Academy

Recent changes to the benefits system have been particularly worrying to many of our volunteers and service users and GO has supported a number to complete the work capability assessment form linked to the Employment Support Allowance.

GO volunteers and staff have responded to invitations to present to others about the work of GO and the New Explorations service. This has included presentations to Quarriers’ Epilepsy support group, WEA.

Through these activities, volunteers and staff have developed and maintained working links with a range of organisations, Commissioning officers in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, and Community Planning Officers in Aberdeenshire.

### **3. New Exploration Mentoring Service**

From 01 September 2009, The Big Lottery Fund has been the main funder for Grampian Opportunities and many of the activities reported under volunteer opportunities and support to individuals and organisations have been part of this service.

The service has developed and adopted master paperwork linked to a Mentor pack, a Mentee pack and Training Pack. Record keeping will play a key part in demonstrating the standard of service as GO’s New Exploration mentoring service works towards achieving the Quality Standard of the Scottish Mentoring Network. This is a new standard and GO has been accepted as one of the services to pilot the standard.

A referral contact system has been set up to monitor the New Explorations Service. 73 contacts were registered up to end June 2010. From July 2010 to the end of June 2011 a further 60 referrals have been accepted.

The referral process has been further developed to support the range of opportunities available within the service. Through the service, people have also been signposted to support, learning and volunteering opportunities.

This financial year 15 new mentors were trained, inducted and approved, bringing the total number of mentors available to work with the service to 32 (two mentors involved in year one are no longer available to the service) To support mentors and enable them to influence and shape the development of the service, a Mentoring support group has been set up which currently meets on a monthly basis.

Ten matches started in the first year were carried forward to year two and at the end of June 2011 a further 19 matches had been recorded, with 12 potential matches pending. Our target is to support 30 matches per year and although only formal matches are recorded for this, there continues to be a strong environment of peer support within the organisation, where examples of natural mentoring can be identified.

Seven potential matches did not progress onto mentoring activity and to more effectively target the efforts of the mentoring coordinators, the decision was made to train staff and volunteers on Signpost training. An in-house training programme is being developed based on the CVS Signpost service. The CVS was unable to deliver training to our members this year but gave permission for us to adapt the material they use to meet the needs of our service.

One member of staff continues on an ILM Coaching and Mentoring course and we plan to set up a training team involving volunteers.

Work on the use of technology to support communication and e-mentoring has been a key area of development this year.

- Two staff and two volunteers completed training with Community Networks, having the opportunity to participate in and learn how to coordinate group telephone sessions
- The use of the chat facility available through Gmail was trialled in the winter and further G mail and Facebook training have been arranged.

We are members of the Scottish Mentoring Network (SMN) and staff and volunteers have participated in the SMN annual conference in November 2010 and an event in Elgin in May 2011.

Grampian Opportunities holds an annual event involving volunteers and at the event in March 2011, we held a speed matching event. The aim was to make mentoring as accessible as possible within GO for both mentees and mentors. Eleven potential skill matches were identified on the day with the most common skills.

#### **4. Research**

**Voices for Change** is the project name given to activity carried out by volunteers to gather information, coordinate events, participate in consultation and use the information gathered to influence the delivery of services to disabled people.

The main areas of our research activity has been on the themes of “Short Breaks” and Accessible Meeting Places

### **Independent Living Initiative**

The steering group known as NEIL stopped meeting earlier this year due to difficulties securing funding to take forward the proposed work. Grampian Opportunities continues to be interested in activity linked to Self Directed Support, the use of Direct Payments and “In Control” and remains committed to the potential of a local independent living initiative. Grampian Opportunities will support this when we can and when appropriate.

We have been speaking to Self Directed Support Scotland (SDSS), Outside the Box and ODS Consulting on the subject of Self Directed support and Independent Living and plan to attend a workshop arranged by the Long Term Condition Alliance Scotland to inform our work in this area.

We are also connected to Shared Care Scotland. This relationship started when we directly provided support to one volunteer, who was in turn supported by a number of other volunteers to take part in training to become a facilitator and then co-facilitated at two Inspiring Break events (Dundee event in April and Inverurie event in June). The working relationship has also developed through our own work linked to short breaks.

### **Future Sustainability**

ODS Consulting business planning support (one of 10 organisations in Scotland)  
Forward Scotland Sus-It Plus training leading to a report and action plan to promote our sustainability. This led to a carbon footprint event being held in January.

Community Networks programme of training has been delivered with Gmail and Facebook training planned to promote alternative communication methods reducing the need to travel to meetings (reduce mileage)

We recognise that the consultation, research and information events delivered this year with grant funding support have the potential to be income generating services which could open up paid opportunities to GO volunteers.

## **5. Networking**

During the year GO continues to participate in networking activities and have signed up to a number of mailing lists to receive e-bulletins and updates from a number of contacts. The experience and connections made contribute to the knowledge we need to effectively signpost and support people who contact us and sign up for our New Explorations service.

We are registered members of Volunteer Development Scotland, members of the Scottish Befriending and Mentoring Networks, and our mentoring coordinators regularly attend meetings of the Aberdeenshire Mental Health Voluntary Sector Group.

During the year GO visited a number of local groups, including the opening of a new Cancer support centre in Huntly, Quarriers new Self Help group in Ellon Open day at Inspire’s Café Academy. A referral for one of our volunteers to the Café Academy training programme was successful in leading to a paid work opportunity.

We attended meetings of Aberdeenshire’s Employment Strategy sub group looking at involving service users in mapping services: ADP/Working for families/MH Aberdeen

(particularly Comraich)/ Job Centre Plus/ Aberdeenshire Council Employment Support Services/ RNIB/Momentum/ Aberdeenshire Council looking at employment group

We attended meetings with NHS Grampian staff to explore condition specific mentoring (Diabetes / Heart conditions), and although there was interest in our proposals, we were unable to identify funding to progress this aspect of mentoring at this time.

## **Marketing**

A small team of volunteers is now in place enabling GO to produce a quarterly newsletter. This is now professionally printed, as well as being available on our website.

In December we participated in a Student Designer's Event which helped us consider the importance of branding.

## **Grants and main sources of income (2010/11)**

### **Grants**

- **The Big Lottery** - "Investing in Communities – Life Transitions programme". To deliver a mentoring service. (awarded four year funding from 01 September 2009)
- **Health Improvement Fund** – to deliver a Confidence to GO programme working in partnership with the WEA.
- **Scottish Community Foundation** (from xx) – to support Short Break research activity.
- **ACORN Centre** - awarded to support a programme of hobby and craft activities.
- **Aberdeenshire Council** – contribution towards training and volunteer costs linked to YODA (Youth Opportunity Database Aberdeenshire) and Short Break research activity (up to March 2011)

### **Donations and Fundraising**

A number of in kind donations have been received from local business and agencies, some have been passed to volunteers and other voluntary sector groups, but GO has directly benefited from the donation of office materials and equipment. Shelving from JG Ross/ Milne & CO

Access to Work support has contributed to the resources needed to enable two members of our staff to sustain employment and a healthy working life.

### **Services**

- **Use of facilities:** GO provides a service to groups which make use of our office facilities for their own meetings. The WRVS have set up a new office of their own and stopped using the facility in January 2011. This is now a very small service due to the demands we have for office and meeting room space for our own activities.

- **Portable Appliance Testing:** GO has a member of staff qualified to carry out Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) and can provide this service to small enterprises and voluntary sector groups.
- **Day Service support:** GO now provides a day service to three individuals using direct payments.
- **Administration charge:** GO agreed to provide banking service for the Inverurie Community Kitchen group and will charge an administration fee for this service. An administration fee is added to all invoices when appropriate.

### **Bank details**

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