



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

## Activity Report

**July 2011 – 30 June 2012**

Grampian Opportunities aims to promote employability, develop enterprise and open up employment, volunteering and learning opportunities for disabled people and people with mental health problems.

Our approach is to support the development of relationships and encourage people to be actively involved in their community.

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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 June 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 and support to take up, retain and progress in learning, volunteering and employment.

## Mission statement

Grampian Opportunities aims to promote employability, develop enterprise and open up employment, volunteering and learning opportunities for disabled people and people with mental health problems. Our approach is to support the development of relationships and encourage people to be actively involved in their community

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.

## 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 2012 are listed below:

### Board membership

- Sandy Murray (chair until May 2012)
- Alisdair Chisholm (interim chair from May 2012)
- 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.
- Shona Owen, Short Break Coordinator from December 2011

### 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 support office activities, volunteer driving, ICT support, mentoring, coordinating events, delivering training, producing our newsletter and developing new projects.

## 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 2011/12:

#### 1. GO Volunteering Opportunities

- During the year GO had **54 active volunteers**, including four volunteer directors. There is also a waiting list for people who have expressed an interest in volunteering.
- In June 2012, almost 40 people attended a **celebration day**, when certificates were awarded to mark a range of achievements. On the day, a marketing questionnaire, designed by one of our volunteers, was circulated to gather information to support our business planning.
- During the year one volunteer achieved an MV award for contributing over 100 hours. We have now registered for the **Saltire Awards** which are the new Scottish awards designed to formally recognise the commitment and contribution of youth volunteering to voluntary organisations.
- To ensure we work towards good practice when involving volunteers, we have registered with our Local Volunteer Centre to work towards the **Volunteer Friendly Award**.

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

**Employability** → Grampian Opportunities piloted a “Go to Work” programme between March and June 2012. An evaluation of the pilot Work Club demonstrated real progress with two participants who had not worked for ten year both achieving part time paid positions.

The New Explorations service records a total of 18 individuals making significant progress retaining, securing or progressing in employment with others making progress towards their own personal goals.

**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. 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”.

We have supported volunteers speak at events, e.g.:

- LTCAS event in Edinburgh
- ARC Scotland Self-Directed Support workshop in Inverurie
- Aberdeenshire Council IDEAS workshop

**Learning Opportunities** → 36 training events were recorded with 49 beneficiaries taking part giving a total of 342 sessions attended.

This includes training delivered in-house e.g. basic mentor training and training for mentors looking at communication analysis, tools, and diversity. Signpost training supported by shadowing and mentored sessions, Training for Trainers were new ventures; as was Inspiring Breaks Facilitator training for members of the Short Break project team.

Quote from trainee mentor, “Just a short note to thank *volunteer trainer* and the both of you (*mentoring coordinators*) once again for delivering a first class mentoring training programme over the last three weeks. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and learned a lot in what was a relaxed but very focussed environment. I think the final session with the mentors and mentee was a great way to bring the training to a conclusion with them sharing their real life experiences of mentoring. So well done to you all!”

We also delivered a “Lifeskills Confidence to GO” course jointly with the WEA and the WEA delivered a Discover New Horizons programme for our twelve of our members.

A range of external training was also supported for volunteers including, Appointed Persons First Aid, Food Hygiene, Confidence to Cook and Food Nutrition.

13 members who attended WEA Skills Plus core skills training during the last financial year were assessed and awarded SQA core skills certificates

**Signposting and Information** → During the year GO has continued to respond to requests from individuals and organisations for information on local services.

The decision has been made to set up Signposting and Training groups to support future activities.

### 3. New Exploration Mentoring Service

The mentoring service was recognised as winner of the Scottish Mentoring Network award for the Health and Disability category 2011; and in June 2012, New Explorations was the first mentoring service to achieve the Scottish Mentoring Network (SMN) Quality Award.

John Nicholls Assessor for the Scottish Mentoring Network Quality Award:

“The Grampian Opportunities application is impressive. They have fully engaged with the application, provided detailed narrative information, answered the indicator questions directly and supported this with extensive documentary evidence. I've highlighted a considerable number of good/best practice features. The only issue is a lack of 'live' evidence but they have provided such a detailed level of detailed information that I am satisfied about their processes and procedures. I would approve them for the standard and classify them as a benchmark application.” May 2012

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

During the first three years of the project we have worked with 214 referrals and closed a total of 126 of these contact, carrying forward 88 contacts into year 4. We had 54 volunteers contributing to our work during this project year and supported 33 mentoring matches.

Feedback from participants on the mentoring service reflects a number of ways in which the project has helped people achieve their personal development goal and demonstrated enhanced employability:

Quote from mentor: “GO/NE has been really good for me and came along just at the right time when I was making tentative steps to branch out into the world again, just a little bit. Being a GO/NE volunteer gave me the confidence in myself to move forward, try new things and move back into some sort of employment. I will probably suffer from mental illness and need to continue my range of medication to control/level it out for the rest of my life. However, I now feel more able to manage it and in a way live with it, in a sort of balanced, harmonious way. It is strange to describe but I now know that however bad it gets I always come back and things get better again and back into balance. I have accepted my mental illness as being part of me and frankly I am not really ashamed of it anymore which is a major turnaround for me. Being involved with GO/NE has helped me to reach this state and for that I will always be thankful to the organisation, volunteers, you and in particular the mentoring coordinator.”

Mentee Quote: “whilst focus on employment I found the mentoring had a focus on my life”

Mentor Quote: “working with a mentee helped me get restarted inspired her to apply for jobs and move on to paid employment”

## 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 have been on the themes of “Short Breaks”, Accessible Meeting Places and Self Directed Support.

- i. **The Accessible meeting places group** launched our first version of a Garioch “Accessible meeting Places Guide.” at our information day in February 2012. The day was attended by over seventy people, including a Councillor, Council officers and Business representatives. This gave us an opportunity to promote the Mentoring Service and other opportunities within Grampian Opportunities. The local MS group and Central Aberdeenshire Access Panel also participated in the event.
- ii. **The Short Breaks Information Project** built on the work of a team of volunteers who had an interest in the challenges raised when trying to arrange a short break or trip away for disabled people who needed care.

The group applied for funding from Shared Care Scotland to develop an information service which would help people access the wider range of information needed relating to transport, accessible accommodation, equipment hire, hiring carers away from home, funding sources to meet the additional costs etc. The funding enabled us to employ a part time coordinator to take forward this work which is funded until November 2012.

At the half way stage we had a team of eight volunteers supporting the work with volunteers having the opportunity to take part in training and develop employment skills to support their volunteering activity.

Carers and people who need care who have engaged with us report they have little or no time for researching short breaks, and that putting together a detailed plan of travel, carers, equipment, accommodation etc can be too daunting. People have also told us they have a feeling of being supported when they are given assistance in achieving new goals.

We have demonstrated to people that a short break can be a holiday, but it can also be a break away from the normal routine, learning a new skill, and finding out how to participate in a new hobby, a day trip out or even a short coffee morning.

Between December and March we had followed up on 16 referrals, and we are now working towards a target of 40 for the year the project is funded.

- iii. **Self Directed Support Activity:** We are part of a Scottish Government funded Project called “**Getting There**” which is led by Outside the Box Support (OTBDS)

Through this project activity, learning about Self Directed support and what it means to us as a small user led provider, we have developed links with a range of organisations: Outside the Box Support, Stepping Stones Mental Health Project, Stirling User Network and a range of other organisations e.g. Values into Action Scotland (VIAS), Scottish Personal Assistant’s Employers Network (SPAEN), Scottish Union of Supported Employment (SUSE), Self Directed Support Scotland (SDSS) Mental Health Foundation, Coalition of Care and Support Providers (CCSP).

We have recognised the need for peer-led support to help people understand Self Directed Support and the support planning process, and we are now looking for funding to take forward this work which will operate under the project name of “**Strike Out**”.

## 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.

We have membership to: the Scottish Mentoring Network , Volunteer Development Scotland, Social Enterprise Scotland, Scottish Union of Supported Employment, SDSS (Self Directed Support Scotland), ACVO and Aberdeenshire CVS and VC Aberdeenshire

We have participated in a number of events to promote the service. This included the Westhill gala in June 2012, where we shared a stand with the volunteer centre.

We also continue to send representatives to networking events including:

- Aberdeen Mental Health Voluntary Sector Group ( links to Choose Life)
- Aberdeenshire Social Enterprise Network
- ARC Scotland Providers SDS consortium
- Employment Network (we have facilitated three sessions of a network for employment support agencies, but feel this activity cannot continue without additional funding.)

## Marketing

We continue to develop our website and newsletter to promote our work.

## Grants and main sources of income (2011/12)

### Grants

- **The Big Lottery** - “Investing in Communities – Life Transitions programme”. To deliver a mentoring service. (awarded four year funding from 01 September 2009)
- **Shared Care Scotland Funding** (from October 2011) – Short Break information service.
- **Triangle Trust** (from October 2011) –to promote group activities.
- **The Wood Group family trust** award through the Youth Philanthropy Initiative – to support us develop the pilot “Go to Work” programme held between March – June 2012

### Donations, Fundraising and reclaiming expenses

A number of in kind donations have been received from local business and agencies, some have been used in the office or used to support volunteering activity and some passed to other voluntary sector groups, This has included a range of office materials and equipment, including the donation of chairs and a printer.

- **Donations:** Donation from a local businessman (Mr Roy McDonald) and a range of smaller donations from individuals using our services.
- **Fundraising activities:** Volunteers have organised a number of fundraising activities, from a quiz, a jumble sale, tombola stand and collection of donations at events.
- **DWP - 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.
- **Getting There Project** – Grampian Opportunities is working with Outside the Box Development Support (OTBDS) on a Scottish Government funded project called “Getting There”. We are able to reclaim agreed costs for taking part in this activity.
- **Reclaiming Expenses:** We reclaim expenses for participating in activities when there is the opportunity to we do this e.g. attending LTCAS event, ODS consultancy, Scottish Mentoring Network,

## Services

- **Day Service support:** Day services purchased through direct payments.
- **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.
- **Hobby and Wellbeing:** A charge to cover craft materials and donations for wellbeing activity adds to fundraising to support this part of our work. The group are mainly in-house but this year we delivered a session for APEX members.
- **Use of facilities:** GO provides a service to groups which make use of our office facilities for their own meetings. This is now a very small service due to the demands we have for office and meeting room space for our own activities.
- **Administration charge:** Small level of funding linked to office and admin services (e.g. printing of certificates for Inverurie Environmental Improvement group, Work Ahead Report for Momentum, managing funds for the Garioch Community Kitchen). An administration fee is added to invoices when appropriate.