



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

## Activity Report

**July 2013 – 30 June 2014**

Grampian Opportunities aims to promote employability, develop enterprise and open up opportunities for employment, volunteering and learning opportunities for people who have a disability, people with mental health problems and people with long term conditions.

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

Grampian Opportunities  
1 High Street  
INVERURIE  
AB51 3QA  
Tel: 01467 629675  
Email: [info@grampianopportunities.org.uk](mailto:info@grampianopportunities.org.uk)  
Web: [www.grampianopportunities.org.uk](http://www.grampianopportunities.org.uk)



## Grampian Employment Opportunities

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

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

We recognise that not everyone is able or wants to be in paid employment but, almost everyone wants 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 1 High Street, Inverurie AB51 3QA. The organisation has offices in Aberdeenshire and can work across Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and 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' 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 2014 are listed below:

### Board membership

- Alisdair Chisholm (chairperson)
- Sandy Murray
- Martin Van der Lee
- Maurice Parkin
- Alistair Law

### Staff

- Linda Singer, Development Worker from 1 December 2003.
- Michael Wright, Support Assistant from 31 January 2007.
- Tricia McLean, Coordinator from July 2009.
- Heather Morrell, Admin support from November 2009 – June 2014.
- Phyllis Gordon, Admin support from November 2010.
- Emma Rennie, Admin support from December 2010.
- Shona Owen, Coordinator from December 2011
- Marie Johnston, Admin support from August 2012
- Shirley Black, Admin support from August 2013
- Dawn Ranson, Coordinator starting May 2014

### Support to board members and staff

During the year, financial support has been provided by Coleen Murphy of Admin Services, Aberdeen. From 01 July 2014 we moved to Keltic Accounting for our payroll and finance support services.

### Volunteers

Grampian Opportunities aims to fully involve people who have a disability and people with mental health problems in the planning, managing and delivery of our services. Opportunities exist within GO to participate as Board and working group members, to support office activities, volunteer driving, ICT(information communication technology) support, mentoring, co-ordinating events, delivering training, researching information and developing new projects.

## Membership

GO membership is open to individuals and organisations with an interest in promoting enterprise and employment opportunities for people who have a disability and people with mental health problems.

## Planning Days and service feedback

Grampian Opportunities Board held an initial stakeholder event in June 2013. This was facilitated by Elaine Mottram of Pensando Consulting. A follow up event was held in September 2013 to report back on the progress made.

We are now committed to holding an annual planning day open to everyone involved with the organisation. The findings from these events have informed our work and priorities over the past year.

With external support we have confirmed three brand value messages to describe our work:

- Grampian Opportunities **supports** people as they take control of their own lives.
- Grampian Opportunities **empowers** people to believe in themselves.
- Grampian Opportunities **promotes** fulfilment, through meaningful employment.

An evaluation of our work told us that the people who join us, start from the initial stage of wanting to have a purpose, having something to do, becoming a volunteer and building their skills and confidence (in terms of practical employment skills as well as social and emotional skills such as meeting new people). For some, the next step, is moving onto further learning, or employment, with the potential of self-employment being an option. The 'Journeys' are very individual and the support required varies.

People said that the greatest help they had from GO was:

1. Having the opportunity to be involved
2. Confidence building
3. Meeting new people
4. Practical / specific skill / experience

A range of other statements that were highlighted, include:

- i. feeling valued
- ii. not being judged
- iii. being encouraged (not pushed)
- iv. "believing in me"

- v. being listened to
- vi. being able to speak in confidence
- vii. having access to a mentor
- viii. “positivity”
- ix. the collective knowledge of others who gave support
- x. being able to put things in perspective
- xi. feeling part of something, and being able to help others.

Methods of support which have been recognised are listed below in the order of identified priority:

- **Skill Development and Work Experience:** Taking up learning or developing skills by taking part and contributing e.g., employment, self-employment, volunteering.
- **Timescales:** Being able to engage with support services at your own pace
- **Information:** Receiving help to access information based on individual need (health, employment, housing, benefits, funding and transport).
- **Communication Skills:** Being able to and have the confidence to voice your opinions and have them listened to, being able to communicate with others.
- **Peer Support:** Accessing support at an individual or group setting, helping you to set goals and move forward in your life.
- **Self-Management:** Learning about ways to better manage your own condition and your work/life balance
- **Mentoring Approach:** Being able to talk to an independent skilled listener.

## Working Groups

During the year, an award through the Government Office of Disability Issues enabled us to review our structure as a Disabled People User Led Organisation (DPULO). This project increased our focus on our governance and sustainability at all levels within the organisation. Staff support and supervision structures were reviewed and all volunteers offered a re-induction using our updated volunteer handbook.

A structure of working groups (involving Board members, staff, volunteers and service users) was also established to regularly inform the Board, enabling them to review and approve actions which the groups can implement.

## The Business Development Working Group

This group confirmed Grampian Opportunities focus on employability as a priority. A current development area is supported self-employment. To support this area of work, one of our Board members agreed to represent Grampian Opportunities on the Board of miEnterprise Scotland.

We identified an online finance system that will enable us to more effectively manage our finances in-house, whilst being available to Board members by logging on to the system. As we grow the need for more accessible finance systems increases.

## The Personal Development Working Group

Following the evaluation of our services and volunteer inductions, (both of which highlighted what people are looking for from their involvement with Grampian Opportunities), we have started to use personal action planning tools like the Outcome Stars, developed by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd, specifically, the Work, and Wellbeing stars.

These personal action planning tools help us to prioritise activities which support individuals to identify and work towards agreed outcomes and demonstrate progress made.

A matrix proposal form has also been developed and will be used to help us make decisions on prioritising project activity and consider risks to the organisation.

## The Self-Directed Support Working Group

The remit of this group is to look at strategic and operational issues, to ensure a clear understanding of what is happening within Grampian Opportunities in relation to Self-Directed Support.

A major part of our work during 2013 looked at the use of Self-Directed Support. This activity was delivered under the branding of “Strike Out” ... support to dream, to plan, to live life to the full.

Scottish Government funding for this activity enabled us to employ a part time coordinator and create three part time supported employment opportunities. We are continuing to support these positions beyond the grant funded period.

We learnt the importance of “telling our stories” and worked with the Scottish Union of Supported Employment to develop case studies on how

Self-Directed Support can support employment.

Strike Out was the project name we used for a range of Scottish Government funded activity we delivered to raise awareness of Self-Directed Support within our own membership and other groups. This built on our work with Outside the Box and their “Getting There” project to support user-led services learn what Self-Directed Support will mean for their organisations and the people they support. Contributing to the “Getting There” project, we have shared our experiences both locally and nationally with individuals and organisations which have an interest in Self-Directed Support.

We are also supporting the work of SDSS (Self-Directed Support Scotland) as they work to set up a group for people accessing Self-Directed Support in Aberdeen City (SEA US).

During September 2013, we also participated in Aberdeenshire Council Self-Directed Support Roadshows.

Following the implementation of the 2013 Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act in April 2014; we recognise that Self-Directed Support is an area which will impact on our services in the future. The Working Group is developing a Self-Directed Support strategy to fit within the organisation strategy.

## **Current Activities (achievements and performance)**

### **Volunteering**

We achieved the Volunteer Friendly Award in July 2013. This award was devised by Volunteer Centre Dundee as a way to recognise and reward groups who are good at involving and supporting their volunteers. Our portfolio of evidence was prepared by a volunteer and then assessed by Volunteer Centre Aberdeenshire (VCA).

It remains our desire to find monies to put in place a volunteer coordinator. Some volunteers moved on during the year, this balanced new recruits and we recorded a total of 50 volunteers contributing to the service during 2013/14.

“Volunteering at GO is probably still the best thing I have ever done. I learnt more at GO than I have ever done at any job before or since. Everyone at GO is always incredibly welcoming and even now when I pop in past for advice or help there is always someone there willing to offer their time and advice. I cannot praise them and thank them enough for all they have done for me.”

Feedback from service evaluation

## Mentoring service

The Big Lottery funding for our Mentoring service ended in August 2013. During the four years of the New Explorations Mentoring Service we responded to 280 referrals.

The total number of mentoring matches supported during this financial year has been 18 and we find that the number of matches has not increased as many new matches became informal / buddying peer support and are not formally recorded.

The findings from our service evaluations identified the areas of importance to individuals as being (1) Skill Development (2) Peer Support and (3) Communication Skills.

“Being introduced to GO made a big difference to me in my mental attitude and ability to returning to as close a full and independent way of life as was possible with a change in my health condition. I am very grateful to being given the opportunities to do this through a variety of courses, being allocated a mentor, help with funding for the courses and for the cost of transport to be able to attend them at Inverurie. I am now attending a computing course once a week in town which will give me the suitable skills in an area of employment I hope to return to in the near future. A huge thank you to all who work at GO and to say it was very much appreciated.” Feedback from service evaluation

Peer Support, Mentoring and Networking are now approaches embedded across all our activities.

## Information Service and Moving Forward

Our activities identified the need for information to support decision making. We work with a range of information providers, and a “GO Connect” group has been set up to explore how we can best support people to access, and effectively use information.

From October 2013, to further develop a Self-Management approach for individuals, we secured two year funding through Alliance Scotland. This work is being delivered under the banner of “Moving Forward”.

The aim of the Moving Forward project is to facilitate access to information, peer support and condition management approaches, to inspire and motivate people with disabilities and people with long term conditions to move forward in their lives. Total number of Individual referrals during the first year

(2013/14) was 115. Activity included the provision of information, events and awareness sessions, focus groups, discussion groups and wellbeing programmes including (a) seated exercise (b) walking sessions (c) discussion groups.

## **Employment programmes**

Through our mentoring service and employment programmes, we recorded that during the year 20 people moved into or progressed in their employment. Employment programmes were supported by Aberdeenshire Council's Fairer Scotland Fund and the May Gurney Foundation until March 2014.

Responding to an identified need, we have been piloting a small group for younger people (18 – 35) to look at what they need to think about to move forward in their lives. They have identified a range of activities with a focus on lifeskills. Budgeting, planning activities and cooking are three areas they want to look at. This group adopted the name GO Dynamix.

A group of 8 volunteers / members come together to look at the feasibility of a supported self-employment service within Grampian Opportunities. We interviewed over 20 people. It was recognised that self-employment can provide a flexible work option - but there remains fear around the effect this may have on an individual's health, the impact on a business if fluctuating health conditions means people cannot meet a business commitment. It was recognised that GO could develop and deliver support to people with disabilities seeking to overcome these challenges and become self-employed.

## **Peer Support, Mentoring and Networking**

We have identified a need to improve the communication channels within GO and other agencies who support the same people as GO. We are implementing methods for people who use our services to be further empowered and supported, so that they are heard at strategic development level.

We want people who have a disability to have the opportunity to engage, participate and influence change to ensure services reflect the needs and views of all. To support this we have developed and adopted "A good practice guide to the role of a representative."

We attend the Aberdeenshire Mental Health Voluntary Sector Group (AMHVSG), ARC Scotland Self-Directed Support Providers Forum and have recently joined the In Control North East Forum.

We continue to work with others e.g. Inverurie Environmental Improvement Group (gardening project) / Inch Group (directory) / The Garioch Partnership (admin service) / Values into Action Scotland and Aberdeen Airport (possible employability project) / Outside the Box Development Support / Self Directed Support Scotland (SDSS)

A priority for next year is to develop a marketing strategy, update our website and make better use of social media.

## Grants and main sources of income (2013/14)

**Grants** (approx. 75% of income)

- **The Big Lottery** - “Investing in Communities – Life Transitions programme”. To deliver a mentoring service. (awarded four year funding from 01 September 2009 – August 2013)
- **Scottish Government Funding** (from January 2013) – to pilot learning programme and Self-Directed Support peer support activity. Delivered as “Strike Out... support to dream, to plan, to live life to the full”
- **May Gurney Award** (until March 2014) – employment support activity
- **Fairer Scotland Funding** (until March 2014) – employment support activity
- **Scottish Union of Supported Employment** (March 2014) – case studies on the use of Self-Directed Support to promote employability.
- **The Big Lottery Fund: Awards for All – Investing in Ideas** – to explore the potential and demand for a support self-employment service
- **Crerar Hotels Trust** – Health and wellbeing activities, including gym memberships, chair based exercises and cooking classes
- **Voluntary Action Fund** (April 2014 – March 2015) – to recruit volunteer Community Connectors.
- **Alliance Scotland** (October 2013 for two years) – Moving Forward developing self-management programme(s)

## **Donations, Fundraising and reclaiming expenses (approx. 5% of income)**

- **Donations / fundraising activities:** A number of donations have been received from individuals and local business.
- **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. We are also supporting an individual achieve the vocations standard required to retain their employment in another organisation.
- **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.
- **Government DPULO funding** – To promote the sustainability of Disabled People’s User Led Organisation including setting up Working groups
- **Reclaiming Expenses:** We reclaim expenses for participating in activities when there is the opportunity to do this.

## **Income Generating Services (approximately 20% of income)**

- **Day Service Support:** Day services purchased through direct payments.
- **The Garioch Partnership:** Provision of an administration service.
- **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.
- **Use of facilities:** GO provides a service to groups which make use of our office facilities for their own meetings.
- **Administration charge:** When appropriate, an 8% administration fee is added to invoices.