



Grampian**Opportunities**
Finding the way forward

Activity Report

July 2009 – 30 June 2010

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 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 company is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association.

History and background

- 2000: Grampian Employment Trust was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee.
- 2002: Joined with Working Alternatives Limited (Opportunities Unlimited)
- 2003: The Company changed its name to Grampian Employment Opportunities and was recognised as charity.
- 2005: The Company accepted a transfer of engagements from North East Scotland Initiatives (NESI).

Vision

Every adult in Grampian, regardless of age, gender, background, ethnicity, disability, personal or health history having the same opportunity as everyone else to find and retain meaningful 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 organisation currently focuses activity in Aberdeenshire but can also operate in Aberdeen City and Moray.

Main office – Inverurie

Aberdeen office from October 2009

Equality of Opportunity statement

Grampian Opportunities is committed to providing an environment of equality of opportunity and treatment in all areas of its work. There is also a commitment to reducing stigma and disadvantage experienced by disabled people and people with mental health problems.

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 2009 are listed below:

Board membership

- Sandy Murray (chair)
- Alisdair Chisholm
- Martin Van der Lee
- Alison Gallie (resigned July 2009)
- Maurice Parkin (appointed March 2010)

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.

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 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 a growing team of volunteers support the planning and delivery of the New Explorations Mentoring service. Volunteers continue to lead on the "Voices for Change" project and represent GO on an Independent Living Initiative Steering group. 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.

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 2009/10:

1. GO Volunteering Opportunities

- During the year GO had twenty seven active volunteers, including four volunteer directors. GO is now registered with CRBS and will be able to carry out our own disclosure checks for staff and volunteers.
- At the start of the year two volunteers achieved MV awards and one volunteer has completed two modules as part of an accredited programme for managing volunteers.
- In February 2010, twenty five people attended a planning day, where staff and volunteers shared information on New Explorations, Voices for Change and the GO Newsletter.
- To recognise the ongoing support of our volunteers, one volunteer arranged two "Feel Good Days" giving GO volunteers and residents at Urybank Sheltered Housing the opportunity to benefit from beauty treatments, massages and a workshop on self compassion.

Feedback on volunteer activity linked to Voices for Change

"For us as volunteers doing our Voices for Change project it made it easier have a pair of hands when we visit our groups as it was scary going to groups the first time. Having someone there to help that we know helped us to gain more experience and confidence to be able to go out and speak to groups. It also helped us to be able to write the report which we have never done before. The money that came from the Lloyds TSB foundation helped to fund some one to be able to assist us in doing a lot of our visits and with the help of this I think that the volunteers involved have gained a lot of experience and confidence to be able to go out and do more visit with less support."

ER, GO volunteer.

2. GO Support to individuals and organisations

References → Volunteering can act as a step back into employment and we have provided references for volunteers, enabling them to take up training, volunteer 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 using Funder finder software for Groups in Need and People in Need. In addition to this, GO has a section on our website where people can access application forms and guidelines for **Craigmyle Community Limited**. Successful funding applications have helped people have access to the specialist equipment, software and training fees needed to enable them to fully participate in the activities of their choice.

Recycling → During the year GO has recycled a number of items. Donated computer equipment is refurbished by a volunteer and then made available to other organisations or volunteers to support their volunteering activities. Items refurbished and recycled this year

included computers, office furniture, greenhouse and photocopiers. This recycling activity is a continuation of work start during 2005/7 sponsored by the Voluntary Action Fund.

Developing skills and confidence → Planning meetings, producing written reports, writing a newsletter, event coordination, developing contact databases, participating in 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 → From the start of the New Explorations Service in September to the end of the financial year in June 2010, 34 people registered with the New Exploration service and staff from GO attended over 60 events and different training activities. The year ended with a presentation by Job Centre Plus and a CV writing workshop.

Information → During the year GO coordinated a programme of events to share information and raise awareness of the support and opportunities available locally:

- In August there was a presentation by YOUR CALL on their national telephone counselling service for disabled people 16 people for 9 different organisations.
- In November, GO worked with members of an Independent Living Initiative steering group to deliver and report on a pre-Consultation on Self Directed Support. Two representatives of the Scottish Government participate in the event which was attended by 38 people representing 14 different organisations 50% of participants were known to be disabled people or carers.

Feedback on Report on Self-directed support pre-consultation event facilitated by Voices for Change Team working with the Independent Living Initiative steering group:

“.....I have said for many years, that my desire to introduce self-directed support is because people who use services want it. However I have said this in general terms based on evidence from elsewhere in the country, rather than actually from the people of Aberdeen. This report is the first that I am aware of that clearly shows that the people of Aberdeen want control of their lives in this way. It is a document that I will read and re-read to ensure that I have understood every detail.....”

JC, Aberdeen City Council

To raise awareness of Independent living and the support available to people, GO held two “Making Connections” events.

- The first in March was held at the Kintore Arms Hotel in Inverurie: Ninety people signed in to the event which had 15 information tables and two small workshops (Community Planning and NEIL). 26 organisations represented, with carers and individuals also in attendance.
- The second Making Connections event was held at Curl Aberdeen, a total of 75 people signed in, with 26 organisations represented. This event had 10 information stalls and a workshop led by the Independent Living in Scotland project.

Email feedback on Making Connections event May 2010:

Just to say CONGRATULATIONS on an excellent event yesterday. We had a good number of volunteer enquiries and made good links with organizations there, so was great and very useful. Lunch was superb as well!

MM of VC Aberdeen

These provided invaluable opportunity to promote the New Exploration Service, and in addition to this, 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 Momentum Carers group, WEA groups in Inverurie and Huntly. Momentum Transitions service for people with acquired brain injury, Quarriers' Epilepsy support staff, Care Managers in Central Aberdeenshire and a presentation to a group of people involved with Working Families.

Through these activities, volunteers and staff have developed 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 2010, 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.

A Referral contact system has been set up to monitor the New Explorations Service 73 contacts were registered up to end June 2010. Through the service, people have been signposted to support, learning and volunteering opportunities. 23 one-to-one matches and 3 group matches have been recorded, in addition to a strong environment of peer support.

- One member of staff is registered on an ILM Coaching and Mentoring course
- One volunteer has completed a mentoring course at Warwick University
- 18 people participated in our in-house mentor training and GO now has 19 approved mentors.
- Work has also started looking at e-mentoring with two people attending a conference to discuss the use of technology with mental health service, and one member of staff has completed a certificated course on Online Communication

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 "Voices for Change" speak up speak out report, published in June 2009 was distributed widely, and in November, Aberdeenshire Council sent out fifty copies to the service providers they use.

The cover letter sent out by the Council with "speak up speak out" report said:

" Grampian Opportunities 'Voices for Change' project produced a report on what groups of people with learning disabilities had told them what they liked about services, what they would change and how they would do it.

They sent one to me and I was so impressed that I asked them if they could produce more for all Aberdeenshire providers.

They agreed to produce DVD's and I agreed to distribute them.

I commend this report to you and your team. We can all learn from this excellent piece of work."

Aberdeenshire Council Commissioning and Services Manager

Independent Living

One of our volunteers attended an induction to ambassador training linked to the Independent living in Scotland project. In addition to this a number of visits and participation at events has started to build connections with Self Directed Support Scotland, the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living and the Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living. A small team of volunteers attended the launch of the Rights to Reality project in Glasgow to find out more about the support available to school leavers to help them achieve their potential.

Feedback on volunteer activity linked to Independent Living Initiative: "The grant allowed us to have support to developed people's potential and make a start at exploring what independent living means to groups in our area. We visited many places near and far in a year and working as a team we all had a part in developing something good and made a report that has been read.
DC, GO volunteer/ Independent living ambassador.

Independent Living Initiative Steering group (NEIL)

Grampian Opportunities continues to be represented on the steering group set up following an event in June 2009 which was attended by Heather Fiskin of the Independent Living Initiative in Scotland Project. The steering group has agreed a Terms of Reference and chose the working title NEIL (North East Independent Living). We believe that there are potential employment and mentoring opportunities for disabled people within a development of this type. Grampian Opportunities is committed to the potential of an independent living initiative and will support this when we can and when appropriate.

Future Sustainability

During the year volunteers have undertaken training by Evaluation Support Scotland. Following on from this, a small fee has been agreed from Momentum to support GO volunteer undertake a level of external evaluation of a Momentum Scotland project. 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 has participated in a number of networking activities. 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 members of the Scottish Befriending and Mentoring Networks

We are registered members of Volunteer Development Scotland, and part of local Coordinators' forums in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. Our mentoring coordinators regularly attend meetings of the Aberdeenshire Mental Health Voluntary Sector Group.

Building on the work of Voices for Change, GO visited a number of local groups, including BITES computer training service, Buchan Community Dial-a-Bus, Club 2000, Fly Cup Catering, Enable ACE group, Future Choices, Housability the Huntly Disabled Club and the Moray Resource Centre.

To further promote communication one disabled volunteer has taken the lead role for coordinating a newsletter for GO. The first newsletter in over two years was produced in February 2010. This newsletter is available on our website which is also being developed by volunteers with staff support.

Grants and main sources of income (2009/10)

Grants

- **Scottish Community Foundation** (until July 2009) - supported visits to groups to learn about the work of others.
- **Awards for All** – to visit groups and hold an event which gives people the opportunity to influence how the support services they need are delivered.
- **The Big Lottery** - “Investing in Communities – Life Transitions programme”. To deliver a mentoring service. (awarded four year funding from 01 September 2009)
- **Lloyds TSB Foundation** (until March 2010) – contributed to the salary costs and sponsored Evaluation Support Scotland training .
- **The Co-op community fund** – equipment and software to support volunteers with visual impairment
- **Mary Salmond Fund** – to purchase specialist software
- **Garioch Charity Shop** - awarded to support a programme of therapeutic activities for volunteers (“Feel Good Days”).
- **Aberdeen City Equality of Opportunities Grant** - to support disabled people participate in Independent living working group activities.
- **Aberdeen City Voluntary Sector Grant** - to support a programme of learning linked to Independent Living.

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.

Volunteers manned two table stalls to promote the organisation and sell small items to raise funds (one event in Aberdeen and one in Aberdeenshire) SPREE books were sold to raise a small level of funds. Donations were made at our Feel Good Day and as the result of a sponsored beard shave by one of our supporters.

In Kind Support came from a number of sources including Scottish Business in the Community (flat screens)/ JG Ross / Tesco/ Direct Payments Caledonia/ Computers and Integration/ Curves/ International Paper.

Access to Work support has contributed to the resources needed to enable a member of 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. The WRVS has shared our office in Inverurie from March 2008

- **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 agreed to provide a day service and first set this up in April 2008. This has increased from one session to five day sessions.

Bank details

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