

Grampian **Opportunities**

Finding the way forward

Activity Report

July 2008 – 30 June 2009

Job creation and assisting people into work is fundamental to the work of Grampian Opportunities which aims to support disabled people and people with mental health problems access the information and support services 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.

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 support disabled people and people with mental health problems access the information and support services 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.

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 who met as required 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
- Edwin Garland (resigned June 2009)
- Alison Gallie

Staff

- Linda Singer, Development worker - from 1 December 2003
- Michael Wright, Support Assistant - from 31 January 2007
- Tricia Mclean, Mentoring coordinator until April 2009 (successfully interviewed to start in July 2009 to work on new grant funded mentoring service)

Support to board members and staff

- Gary Walker (financial support through Tenants First Housing Co-operative)

Volunteers

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 volunteers have led on the Voices for Change project and the New Explorations development project. Voices for Change volunteers are also representing Grampian Opportunities on an Independent Living Initiative Steering group.

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 2008/09:

1. GO Volunteering Opportunities

- Grampian Opportunities aims to fully involve disabled people and people with mental health problems in the planning, managing and delivery of services. During the year GO had five volunteer directors with an additional twenty six people registered as volunteers. This included six new volunteers recruited during the year.
- GO held their first photography competition titled "The spirit of volunteering" in 2007/08. A follow up event was held in July 2008 at the Inverbervie Christian Centre and Johnshaven brownies were presented with their certificates and had the opportunity to meet three of the disabled volunteers involved in this activity.
- In June 2009, to mark Volunteer week, GO held an open day at our Inverurie office. This was co-hosted by the WRVS and Grampian Society for the Blind befriending service. 40 people attended on the day and several signed up to volunteering.
- Two of our younger volunteers achieved MV awards for their volunteering hours with GO. Both have progressed in their careers, and one continues to volunteer with the organisation.
- We continue to support people take up volunteering opportunities within GO or with other groups, and recognise that for some, volunteering can act as a step back into employment. During the year one of our volunteers returned to employment after several years out of paid employment.
- We have provided references for a number of volunteers, enabling them to take up training, volunteer opportunities or paid employment.

To enhance our volunteer involvement, one of our volunteers is being supported to participate in volunteer coordinator's training. We are also registered as members of Volunteer Development Scotland, and part of local Coordinators' forums in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

2a. GO Support to individuals

- In 2007/08 GO supported eleven participants on a Peer Support and Mentoring Training Programme delivered by the Scottish Social Enterprise Academy. Nine chose to complete a written assignment which led to an ILM recognised certificate.
- Nine people from the organisation took part in SAFE talk training.
- Four people attended Self-directed Support Scotland training in May 2009.
- One member of staff complete a Leadership course

- One member of staff continues to develop ICT skills and attended training on using ICT to conduct research.
- One member of staff attended Evaluation training as part of our pre-start activity for the Big Lottery Fund Investing in Communities – Life transition funded mentoring service we will be delivering from 01 September 2009.
- GO provided a work placement for an individual referred by Support Training
- Two volunteers shared their experience with volunteers participating on the pilot mentoring service giving presentations on WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Planning) and Condition management

2b. GO support to Organisations (including ICT support)

- **Craigmyle Community Limited:** GO supported the group update their grant application procedures and set up a section on our website to enable people to access application forms and guidelines.
- **Funding searches:** GO continues to support organisations and individuals' research funding options using Funder finder software for Groups in Need and People in Need.
- During the year GO has also recycled a number of resources donated to the organisations for the benefit of voluntary sector groups or to support volunteers in their community activity. This has included:
 - Photocopiers: one to Computers and Integration and one to a volunteer (for home volunteering)
 - Desk, computer and two drawer filing cabinet to a volunteer (for home volunteering)
 - Computer donated to Inverurie Bowling group
 - Computer donated from one volunteer passed to another to support learning
 - Television and video donated by one volunteer passed to another volunteer
- **Grampian Employment Network:** GO provided secretarial support to the Grampian Employment Network and helped to coordinate a Diversity Awards employment event held at Pittodrie House Hotel in September 2008. In May 2009 following the setting up of Employment forums linked to Community Planning Partnerships in the three local authority areas the Grampian Employment Network decided to disband.
- **Hillpark Community Flat:** For a number of years GO has held the lease for property used by the Hillpark Community group. GO gave up this lease in January 2009 and Hillpark now lease this property directly from Tenants First Housing Cooperative.
- **Outside the Box – way forward project:** In December 2008, two volunteers from GO gave a presentation at an event held in Aberdeen to raise awareness of Outside the Box – way forward project.
- **Westhill Community Forum of Mental Wellbeing group:** In October 2008, GO participated at an Employability event in Westhill.

3. **Developing a Peer-led Mentoring Service**

- A Launch event to present our pilot service was held in September 2008. This Launch event was attended by almost 40 individuals representing sixteen different organisations. Some workers who attended felt the service could benefit not only their clients but themselves in the work they do with disabled people. An end of project report was produced in February, and the information gathered was used to support a successful application to the Big Lottery Fund to further develop a peer-led mentoring service.

4. **Research**

- **Voices for Change**

A small group of volunteers at GO, secured funding to enable them to visit and report on eight groups which involve disabled people and carers. The purpose of the visits was to find out what people like about the group, what helps them live independently and if they would change anything, what would it be, and how would they do it.

The report was completed in June 2009 and further funding secured to support wider dissemination of the research. The group have increased their confidence and skills while carrying out this work. They have also identified the potential to further develop consultation and group advocacy activity in a paid or voluntary role.

- **Independent Living**

Building on learning about "In-Control" carried out in 2007/08, GO accessed funding to support disabled people take part in an Aberdeen City Independent Living Initiative working group and coordinated a meeting to enable disabled people contribute to a feasibility study. Further activity included GO representatives attending a Self-directed Support event facilitated by Inspiring Inclusion, and participating in a visit to the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living. GO was represented at the launch of the Independent Living in Scotland Project in Edinburgh and coordinated group visits to a number of different services including the Moray Resource Centre in March 2009 and a group visit to the Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living in May 2009.

In June 2009 GO coordinated an event attended by Heather Fiskin of the Independent Living Initiative in Scotland Project. Following this a number of groups agreed to set up a steering group to progress an Independent Living Initiative serving people in Aberdeen City and 'Shire.

GO will continue to support a programme of learning relating to Independent Living. We believe that there are potential employment and mentoring opportunities for disabled people within a development of this type.

5. **Networking**

During the year GO has participated in a number of networking activities:

- Grampian Employment Network
- Aberdeenshire Social Enterprise Network
- Independent Living Initiative Steering group

- VC Aberdeenshire and VC Aberdeen Volunteer coordinators forums
- Scottish Mentoring Network

Grants and main sources of income (2008/09)

Grants

- **Garioch Charity Shop** - awarded to purchase specialist software and equipment.
- **Aberdeen City Equality of Opportunities Grant** - to support disabled people participate in Independent living working group activities.
- **Scottish Community Foundation** - to support visits to groups to learn about the work of others.
- **Aberdeen City Voluntary Sector Grant** - to support a programme of learning linked to Independent Living.
- **Lloyds TSB Foundation** – to contribute to the salary of the Development worker.
- **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** - The Big Lottery “Investing in Ideas” funding supported the ongoing activity of our New Explorations mentoring development project. This funding ended in February 2009. Preparing for this an application was submitted to the Big Lottery “Investing in Communities – Life Transitions programme”. An outline was submitted in July 2008, approval to proceed and next stage application submitted in November 2008 – with successful award publicly announced in June 2009.

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 chairs, folders, paper, a Television with built in DVD player for use in training, and two computers to improve on those used in the office.

SPREE books were sold to raise a small level of funds.

Services

- **Use of facilities:** GO provides a service to groups which make use of our office facilities. The WRVS shared our office in Inverurie from March 2008 and the Momentum Transition service continue to make occasional use a room for their carer’s group to meet.
- **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

Grampian Employment Opportunities

Clydesdale Bank plc

1 Queen's cross

ABERDEEN

AB15 4XU

Account number: 60268815

Sort code: 82 60 11

Employers and public liability Insurance: Policy number VC/ 134571

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