

CELEBRATING VOLUNTEERS

Lessons Learnt summary

April 2013 – July 2014



Introduction

The celebrating volunteer programme is a pilot project which supports local people to take part in volunteering opportunities whilst completing a level one volunteer qualification. The programme is a partnership between Inspiring Communities Together, Salford University and Lower Kersal Centre. Priority is given to those who are looking to develop back to work skills by accessing volunteer opportunities in the local community along side gaining qualifications in recognition of their volunteer roles.

Between April 2013 and July 2014 four programmes have been delivered with 15 volunteers involved. Each programme ran for a minimum of ten weeks with all volunteers attending a weekly two hour group session to complete the learning element. This approach has enable volunteers to share experience with other volunteers alongside being provided with support to complete their level one qualification.

Identified need for the programme

The programme was developed based on two identified needs within the local community:

- Organisations were facing considerable cuts in funding but still had an identified need to deliver services for local people. East Salford has one of the highest number people in the city with low skills, high rates of early death from long term conditions and high numbers of people being effected by the changes in benefits including the back to work programme. By developing a quality volunteer experience it was hoped that more local people would feel able to volunteer within the community to help maintain services and activity at a local level.
- Many local people were being affected by the work programme but had no track record of working and no formal qualifications. The volunteer programme would give these people an opportunity to gains some experience and skills within a volunteering environment along side gaining a formal qualification. Those taking part in the programme would be invited to attend an advice and guidance interview which would sign post to further learning or employment opportunities and produce a CV demonstrating the skills they had learnt.

Aims:

- *Improve capacity and skills to feel more confident to try new things*
- *Improve self confidence to get involved and make a difference*
- *Nurture networking and share experiences*

Outcomes:

- *To increase the number of local people who have the skills to enable them to move into further learning or employment*
- *To recognise the value of volunteering as a pathway into employment or further learning for local people*
- *To improve the volunteer experience within local community organisations to support a growing network of volunteer opportunities in the neighbourhood*

The programme

The approach was based on volunteers giving some time to volunteer within a community organisation along side taking part in a more formal learning environment. Three partners were actively involved in the delivery of the programme. A further five organisations

provided volunteer opportunities and staff support to the volunteers as part of their volunteer role.

Who took part in the programme

Male	Female	BME	LGBT	Disability	Under 18	18-30	31-60	Over 60
4	11	3	2	4	0	6	9	0

During the period April 2013 and July 2014 fifteen volunteers took part in the programme from seven local community organisations. Volunteer opportunities ranged from child care, catering, reception/administration, retail, customer support, community development. Environmental activity.

The volunteers were recruited for the project through networks which Inspiring Communities Together already had as well as an open recruitment through the Essence newsletter and East Salford neighbourhood bulletin.

The following organisations indentified volunteers to take part in the programme:

- St Sebastian’s Community Centre
- Lower Kersal Centre
- Broughton Trust (Communities Living Sustainable project and Just Youth)
- Salix Homes
- Together Housing
- Biospheric Foundation CIC
- Somerville Children’s Centre

How much did it cost?

All three delivery partners have given their time at nil cost to the pilot programme. Additional costs such as room hire, printing, ASDAN qualification accreditation has been funded through Inspiring Communities Together Annuity as the pilot programme aimed to support local people and/or organisations in Charlestown and Lower Kersal. The exception to this was two tenants of Together Housing, one of which will be volunteering for a project in Charlestown from September. Outlined below is the estimate expenditure for the pilot programme along side the estimate number of hours the volunteers gave back in time to their host organisations. The volunteer hours do not included the time allocated to take part in the learning sessions.

TOTAL expenditure for 4 x 10 week celebrating volunteers programme @ £15.00 per hour for staff costs	£5588.50(e)
TOTAL value of volunteer hours based on volunteer England rate @ £11.91 per hour of volunteering	£5002.20 (e)

Learning element of the programme

All volunteers attended a two hour a week learning session. The sessions enabled the cohort of volunteers to come together and:

- Share individual volunteer experiences
- Use their volunteer experience to build a portfolio of evidence
- Develop knowledge which they could use within their volunteer roles

- Build back to work skills such as team working, confidence building, presentation skills.

The programme of learning included the following elements:

Unit	Learning outcomes
Communities with which volunteers work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding different communities with which volunteers and volunteering organisations work • Understanding how your own organisation serves the community
Understanding what volunteering is about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding that there is a range of volunteering opportunities • Understand how volunteering benefits the volunteer • Understand volunteers rights and responsibilities within your own organisation
Carrying out own volunteering role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding your volunteer role and responsibilities • Be able to carry out your volunteering role to the required standard
Health and safety in the work place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding rights and responsibilities relating to workplace health and safety • Understanding health and safety arrangements in your own workplace • Understanding how to prevent and deal with accidents • Be able to perform workplace tasks safely
Improving own performance as a volunteer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to produce an action plan to improve your own performance • Be able to carry out your action plan to improve performance as a volunteer • Be able to review and update a personal action plan to improve your performance as a volunteer • Understand the importance of support and performance review for volunteers
Time management and volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the relevance of time management tools/techniques for volunteers • Be able to use time management tools/techniques to prepare for carrying out volunteer activity • Be able to use time management tools/techniques to prepare for carrying out volunteer activity within deadlines • Be able to review effectiveness of time management tools/techniques
Presentation skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how to improve your presentation skills • Be able to plan a presentation • Be able to deliver a presentation • Be able to review your presentation skills
Building on volunteering to develop a career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand your own achievements as a volunteer • Be able to produce a CV that incorporates your volunteer achievements • Be able to access information and advice and agree next steps to develop your own career

For the third cohort the programme also introduced the Work outcomes star which was completed at the first learning session and again at the final learning session. Results so far have shown that:

- By taking part in the celebrating volunteering programme all those who completed the work star felt they have developed back to work skills
- All felt they had improved their social skills for work

- Although English was not the first language for some volunteers and others had low level basic skills all scored their basic skills range from 5/6 at the start of the programme to 8/9 at the end of the programme
- Aspiration and motivation was scored at 5/6 at the start of the programme and by the end 9/10 was the average score.

Lessons Learnt- case study

Improve capacity and skills to feel more confident to try new things - All volunteers felt they had learnt new skills and were more motivated to try new things – Volunteer T at the start of the programme had very low levels of English and did not engage well within the group work sessions because of a lack of basic English skills.. During the first presentation skills unit volunteer T was not happy to present in front of other group members. During the ten week period volunteer T was able to start to carry out a volunteer role on a busy reception dealing with the general public, deal with telephone queries and at the end of the programme took part in a presentation on “what volunteer means to me” which was also filmed.

Lessons Learnt- case study

Improve self confidence to get involved and make a difference – Through out the programme volunteer confidence grew –Volunteer P at the start of the programme had very low self esteem. Volunteer P despite having had a good job following a long period of illness they felt unable to get back into the workplace due to very low self esteem. They took up a volunteer role within a community centre work club and were encourage to enrol on the celebrating volunteering programme. By seeing that they had a number of skills which would enable them to get back into the work place and that those skills could help others their own self confidence improved. Before the ten week programme had finished they felt able to take up a part time temporary contact of employment whilst continuing their volunteering role and completing the learning element of the programme. Volunteer P successful achieved their level one in volunteering certificate and has now secured full time employment.

Lessons Learnt- case study

Nurture networking and share experiences – By bringing volunteers together with different skills, knowledge and experience of volunteering all the volunteers felt they had been able to understand more about opportunities within their own community. During the programme volunteers were able to arrange a group visit to their own volunteer organisation. This gave volunteers the opportunity to plan an activity and share their own knowledge and skills about what they had learnt from their own volunteer role. Those volunteers who attended the visits were able to see first hand projects and activities which they were previously unaware of.

Group sessions brought together volunteers with very different skill levels ranging from volunteers with very low basic skills, physical disabilities and English as a second language. Group members however supported each other to complete the work needed and this supportive environment helped to create a nurturing network. Volunteer B struggled at the start of the learning sessions to understand the need to complete the work sheets and produce evidence relevant to the unit the group were working on. The volunteer could at times be disruptive and even walk out of sessions. By group members encouraging and supporting the volunteer to build their confidence to have a go volunteer B along with the other volunteers in this cohort all successfully completed their level one certificate.

Key achievements - outcomes

This was a pilot programme which set out to achieve the following outcomes for local people and organisations;

Outcome	Key achievements
To increase the number of local people who have the skills to enable them to move into further learning or employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 Local people took part in the programme and as a result improved their individual back to work skills • 13 Volunteers completed their level one qualification in volunteering • 7 volunteers have taken up further learning opportunities including level one in customer services, level one in child care, basic health and safety, food safety level two • 2 volunteers wish to progress to a level two in volunteering and have developed a project which they will be delivering in September 2014
To recognise the value of volunteering as a pathway into employment or further learning for local people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 volunteers attended every learning session along side fulfilling a volunteer commitment of a minimum of 3 hours per week within their host organisations. • 6 volunteers have received their level one certificate in volunteering • 5 volunteers have taken up employment opportunities • 1 volunteer is actively seeking employment and has been shorted listed for a position. This is despite starting the programme by saying she would not be looking to go back to work as she would not be able too afford to with having young children
To improve the volunteer experience within local community organisations to support a growing network of volunteer opportunities in the neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 volunteer is now leading on the volunteers programme within their host organisation • 14 new volunteers have been recruited to volunteer opportunities with local community organisations • 7 local community organisations have seen the benefit of building a volunteer network along side supporting volunteers to build their own skills.

Things we can improve on

- Be clear with host organisations what is expected of them and that the commitment to the volunteers is important to help them develop as individuals.
- Develop an introduction session for volunteers and their host organisation at the start of the programme
- Build into the programme the individual journey of volunteers. This has started by using the work star evaluation tool
- Be clear about the actual cost of this type of programme and the added value brought from working with volunteers
- Promote and raise the profile of the programme to a wider audience to increase volunteer opportunities in the local community

