

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Volunteer Plan – Annual Update

**REPORT OF:** Paul Dowling, Strategic Director, Communities and Environment

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## **Summary**

Corporate Vitality Overview and Scrutiny Committee previously agreed that that this Committee should receive an annual update of the implementation of the Councils Volunteers Plan, now known as Helping Out.

This report provides information about the plan, number of volunteers, the types and examples of volunteer roles, examples of group volunteer project and the impact of volunteering in Gateshead's communities.

The report also includes some priorities for future consideration.

Appendix 1 in this report lists some examples of volunteer roles, how they have been targeted to volunteers as well as examples of group volunteering and the impact on the community (including economic value).

## **Introduction**

1. Gateshead Council has adopted the Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives, and this will now supersede the current Council Plan. The pledge "*Support our communities to support themselves and each other*" is very at the heart of the Council's approach to volunteering.
2. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019/20 to 2023/24 states that the Council will continue to seek to mitigate demand pressures within services by capacity building within communities, including, where appropriate, work with partners and volunteers.
3. In April 2018 Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the content of the Volunteers Plan Refresh. The plan offered a new set of commitments to support residents and community organisations in Gateshead to help each other out. The plan is attached as Appendix 2.

## **Progress to date**

4. The original Volunteers Plan (2013) and refresh (2018) have helped provide a co-ordinated approach to volunteering in Gateshead. The plan was originally structured around key principles which aimed to support volunteers as well as organisations and services delivering volunteer opportunities

5. Since the creation of the original plan in (2013) there are now 1,978 residents registered with Gateshead Council to volunteer (increase of 1,928). As a very conservative estimate there could be as many as 8,000 – 10,000 volunteers actively helping across our communities.
6. Volunteers in Gateshead provide help to a range of council services and voluntary groups, most notably in the environmental, social care, health & sport and community centres.
7. Corporate volunteer days continue to grow in demand, with a total of over 80 individual organisations being offered tailored bespoke volunteer days supporting an estimated 2,500 individual employee volunteers (as at 2018). The economic value to the Gateshead community of corporate and group volunteering activity overall is estimated at £160,955.
8. The Residents Survey 2012 set out two main aims for the Volunteers Plan:
  - To increase formal volunteering from 18% to 25%
  - To increase informal volunteering from 34% to 40%
9. The Residents Survey in 2016 demonstrated the targets set for informal and formal volunteering have been achieved.
  - Formal volunteering target of an increase to 25% achieved 51.9%
  - Informal volunteering target of an increase to 40% achieved 67%
  - Improving local areas (not as part of a group) – 47.3%
10. The Resident Survey in 2018 demonstrated that these have continued to increase with
  - 54.4% of residents taking part in formal volunteering
  - 75.3% of residents taking part in informal volunteering
  - 57.4% of residents improve their local area (not as part of a group)
11. Gateshead's sixth Volunteers' Month took place in June 2018. Throughout June 113,151 hours were recorded on the volunteer totaliser which equates to £1,470,963 economic value for 2018. That's an increase of 6,952 hours over the month and an increase of £90,606.
12. A total of £12,577 was allocated through Gateshead Volunteers Month Grant delivered by the Community Foundation.

### **Gateshead Volunteer Recruitment**

13. The Volunteers Plan and systems for the management of volunteering projects had remained largely unchanged since 2013 until the refresh. Therefore, some of the systems and processes that support the recruitment and retention of volunteers are now difficult to manage efficiently due to the increasing volume of volunteering requests and the capacity available to process the requests.
14. In addition, it has always been acknowledged that the Council's arrangements and systems only cover a fraction of the volunteering that takes place across

Gateshead, many communities and community organisations co-ordinate their own volunteering opportunities and have their own effective systems and processes for managing these.

### **Open Lab**

15. Over the last 12 months, in an effort to help address some of the issues around recruitment and management of volunteers, a collaborative project between the Council, Open Lab Newcastle and PACT Lab Northumbria has been evaluating the processes and exploring options to improve the systems that support the volunteering support provided by the Council.
16. The engagement has consisted of workshops and interviews with councillors, council officers, volunteer groups and individuals all engaged in some way in voluntary activity.
17. One of the main findings from this and other research into volunteer recruitment is that an online system is required to provide appropriate support and alleviate some of the current constraints.
18. The Neighbourhood Management and Volunteering team are now looking at the various off the shelf volunteer management systems that could be purchased to help improve efficiency and quality of the support.
19. Any new system that is developed will need to be sourced from an external provider and will have a cost implication. This will also result in the system being tailored for Gateshead's individual needs.

### **Further engagement with Trade Unions & partners**

20. Development work of council volunteer roles continues to involve engagement with Trade Unions & partners. Volunteering continues to increase as does the importance of ensuring effective and efficient working. This involves ensuring there is continued clear delineation between volunteers and employees of the council meaning that volunteers and officers can continue to work together.
21. As services continue to develop and provide volunteer roles, employees and volunteers continue to work alongside each other. It is important to ensure that this continues to be coordinated where regular opportunities and information is disseminated and shared.

### **Gateshead Council Employer Volunteering Scheme**

22. In May 2014 Gateshead Council Employees Volunteering Policy was refreshed enabling employees to request up to 15 hours paid time to volunteer in Gateshead over a 12-month period. This needs to be matched by at least 15 hours pro rata of employee's own time. The scheme also enables teams of employees to take part in taster sessions and enabling them to have a half day paid leave to participate in a group project. The policy can be found on the intranet using the link below.

<https://intranet.gateshead.gov.uk/article/2038/Employer-supported-volunteering-scheme>

23. There are currently 67 employees registered as volunteers through the scheme. This is made up of individual volunteers as well as teams of volunteers.
24. In 2018 only 5 internal teams (varying in size) took up the opportunity to be involved in the delivery of a team volunteer day compared to the 30 external organisations requesting volunteer days in 2018 specifically. Some examples of Council employee volunteer days are included in Appendix 1.
25. The opportunity encourages employees to not only get involved in the local community that they serve, but also work together as a team developing their overall and individual skill sets towards a joint objective.
26. Promotional activity will continue in 2018/2019 with an aim to increase the number of employee volunteer days. This is an underused resource that could provide a needed investment into the Community of Gateshead.
27. Activities to develop this further can include promotion in council employee info and updates via Team management meetings.

### **Key areas of work moving forward:**

#### **Environmental Friends of Groups**

28. Throughout Gateshead there are many different informal Environmental Friends of Groups (FOG) that support their local community with the maintenance and upkeep of Gateshead's open spaces and parks.
29. There are currently an estimated 40 FOGs at various locations throughout Gateshead. With an average of 15 members per group this is an estimated 600 volunteers. There were an estimated 25 FOGs in 2017. These groups all have their own individual aims and objectives as well as support needs.
30. Development with these groups is supported by the Volunteer Coordinator for Countryside & Environment as well as the Development Officer for Volunteering within Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering.
31. A reoccurring barrier for these groups began to develop around public liability insurance. As the volunteers making up the FOGs would be delivering activities within open spaces and parks (where there are likely to be members of the public) Public Liability Insurance is a necessity. This is not only to protect members of the public but also the volunteers themselves.
32. A procedure has been established and developed with Gateshead Council to enable FOGs to register their volunteers and to receive tailored support around tasks within designated open spaces, receive equipment that is required, necessary training and any additional volunteers as well as any other area of support identified. This also includes a process by which the volunteers involved become covered under the Council's Public Liability insurance policy.

33. This area of work will be further researched and responded to. It is hoped to tailor specific elements of support to these groups to increase their capacity including support such as:
- Applying for funding
  - Training
  - Supporting other groups
  - Volunteering including promoting individual roles and group task days
  - Developing policies including insurance coverage
  - Sharing knowledge, skills and best practice across Friends of Groups
34. Working with Street Scene Services support to these groups will be developed and aimed to be launched around Spring 2019. It is hoped initially this will be in the form of a large conference type event.

### **Young people and volunteering**

35. One specific key area of development which has been identified through recent work is volunteering in young people. Through working with organisations such as National Citizenship Service (NCS) and Tyne Wear Skills there is a strong need to develop some work and support to link young people with volunteering opportunities and projects that are available in Gateshead.
36. Tyne Wear Skills conducted their own research through one of their young volunteers funded through the Community Foundation. Their research "*Equality in Volunteering*" received 41 responses all of which were young people aged between 18- 25. 27 participants were Male and 14 females. The research was specifically aimed at young people who have learning disabilities.
37. The questionnaire was boroughwide and 22 of those questioned had volunteered before. The two most frequent volunteering areas are retail and customer services.
38. Some of the main identified barriers to volunteering include:
- Not having experience in volunteering
  - Lack of support
  - Not a quality placement
  - Difficulty in communication
39. Some of the successful points of volunteering include:
- Meeting new people
  - Helping people
  - Gaining confidence and experience
  - Being able to take ownership and having support while volunteering
40. 35 out of 41 participants felt that volunteering will provide valuable life skills. Working with this research and this group some initiatives and specific projects responding to some of the findings of this research can be developed with the aim of removing some of the barriers to volunteering.

41. Links already established with secondary schools, colleges, universities and youth groups will continue to ensure that as much valuable input as possible is incorporated into this future area of work.

### **Future Actions**

42. There are several priority areas for future actions which have been identified in the continued delivery of the Volunteers Plan:

- Create a new online management system to recruit volunteers, record volunteers, promote volunteer roles and match available volunteers to opportunities within Gateshead. The system will also need to generate specific reports to monitor volunteering.
- Continue promotion of the Employee Volunteering Scheme specifically group volunteer opportunities for teams of Council employees
- Create and deliver the volunteer programme supporting The World Transplant Games 17<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> August 2019 (listed in Appendix 1)
- Continue development work with corporate organisations around group volunteering and provide links to the voluntary sector
- Continued development of volunteering opportunities on OurGateshead and using the online resource as a space to share experiences and good news stories to illustrate examples of good practice
- Continued development work with local colleges and universities
- Development of young people and volunteering including Tyne Wear Skills and for example specific tailored projects for groups of young people including sixth forms and secondary schools as well as youth groups
- Continue to provide lead support for volunteering with the Voluntary & Community sector as well as for council service projects and roles.
- Specific support including a conference type event for Environmental Friends of Groups working with Street Scene Team.
- Continue working relationships with Trade Unions regarding the creation of further volunteering opportunities.

### **Recommendations**

43. Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- i. Note and comment on the progress of implementation of the Volunteers Plan
- ii. Consider the future actions as set out in paragraph 41.

## Volunteer Case studies 2018

### Example 1 – Handelsbanken Gateshead 2018

Handelsbanken Gateshead returned this year and assigned another 10 employees to volunteer with Gateshead Carers Trust. (also sent 15 employees in 2017 to another group opportunity).

The group enjoyed another volunteer day in Gateshead as a team.

Carers Trust have a large residential property called Kites Rise. Since 2014 Kites Risk has been used by young carers and young adults for short breaks. Short breaks for young adults with learning disabilities (18-30 years) are also offered.

The group of employees from Handelsbanken spent the day at Kites Rise in July 2018. The volunteers helped by redecorating some of the facilities, and also helped with some of the gardening tasks. The volunteers had a positive experience and the Carers Trust really benefitted from their input.



Total Economic input of **£1,140** into the community of Gateshead from this project.

## **Example 2 – Christmas Wrapping Event 2018, Church of Latter Day Saints**

During the festive period Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering coordinate a Christmas collection of donations for those who are in greatest need in Gateshead every year. A collection point was available at the civic centre from 20<sup>th</sup> November until 20<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and there was a general call for any items that could be provided including:

- Christmas wrapping paper materials
- empty shoe boxes
- small children's toys
- baby wipes
- hats, scarfs and gloves
- toiletries & hygiene products
- hair bobbles & hair brushes
- chocolates, sweets and other goodies

As in 2016 all 38 Sheltered Accommodation schemes within Gateshead took part. This year there was also support from local schools and organisations including; Car Hill Primary School, Riverside Primary School and Tarmac.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Low Fell hosted the wrapping event again on the evening of Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2017. The church members all took part and also welcomed any other volunteers along. All involved also were provided with a cooked meal by the church members.

In 2016 in excess of 150 packages were wrapped and prepared. This year over 450 packages were wrapped and prepared. The Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering team then distributed these packages out to all those groups & organisations that support people most in need in Gateshead.

The organisations who received these gifts included:

- Pattinson House
- Young Womens Outreach Project
- Salvation Army
- Bensham Food Coop
- St Chads Community Project
- Young People Leaving Care
- Looked after children
- Evolve
- Barnardo's
- Changing Lives
- Oxford Terrace Medical Group
- Gateshead Housing services





The project will be repeated again this year and the church of Latter Day Saints are once again offering their much valued support for the wrapping event.

If you would like any more information on the arrangements for the 2018 project please contact Kate Marshall on [katemarshall@gateshead.gov.uk](mailto:katemarshall@gateshead.gov.uk)

The 2017 wrapping event had the economic value of £4,320 (estimated 80 volunteers)  
Parcels - £6,750 (estimated average value of £15 per package)

Total Economic value of **£11,070** to the community from this project.

### **Example 3 - World Transplant Games, Gateshead Council volunteer opportunity**

The World Transplant Games Federation give recipients of transplants the motivation to strive towards full rehabilitation through exercise, camaraderie and health living.

The main objective of the World Transplant Games is to demonstrate that people with transplants can compete in sporting activities and well. These Games, on a much smaller scale, also allow donor families and living donors to get involved and be part of the celebration.

Newcastle and Gateshead will be hosting the World Transplant Games 2019 and will take place from 17<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> August 2019.

There will be events in Gateshead, Newcastle and Sunderland. Gateshead will be responsible for the recruitment, training, and management of all the 400+ volunteers needed for the Games.

The volunteer recruitment will launch on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018. Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering will be supporting Sport & Leisure Services with the volunteer requirements.

This is a positive opportunity for Gateshead volunteers to get involved in a large scale worldwide event.

More information on the World Transplant Games 2019 will be available at [www.gateshead.gov.uk/volunteering](http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/volunteering)

#### Example 4 – Gateshead Council Employee Volunteering, SENIT Team 2018

The SENIT Gateshead Council team returned in 2018 to deliver a volunteer day through the employee volunteering policy. This time there were a total of 17 employees involved.

The team delivered two projects in one day at Kay Cottages Sheltered Accommodation Scheme based in Windy Nook.

The team of volunteers were able to paint the full communal lounge as well as tidy up the communal garden space. The volunteers had a great experience and were able to interact with the residents and hear about the impact the change will have on them.

Some of the residents also took part in some of the tasks in the garden with the team. The two projects ensured that everyone could get involved by either delivering light touch tasks or more heavy-duty activities.

The residents were thrilled with the work by the volunteers and extremely thankful.



Economic impact of **£1,768** in the community of Gateshead from this project.



### **Example 5 – Gateshead Council Employee volunteering scheme, Neighbourhood Management and volunteering 2018**

Gateshead Council's Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering Team recently spent their annual volunteering day in Wardley Countryside Park last week. The team joined the Gateshead Countryside Rangers to help remove overgrown vegetation & old fencing, top up footpaths with gravel, replace missing gates and litter pick throughout the full park.



One of the Countryside Rangers said:

*“This was a great opportunity to meet people from the Council. All this extra help today means that we have completed a lot of jobs that would have taken so much longer for us to do on our own. It’s been a lovely day”*

A member of the public visiting the park on the day commented:

*“This park is looking beautiful thanks to the hard work of you volunteers. I really appreciate all of your hard work, and love seeing you all when I visit the park”*

The appreciation of local residents is a credit to the Countryside Rangers and all their hard work on their regular visits to the park.

Wardley Countryside Park is just one of the sites that the Volunteer Countryside Rangers help out in Gateshead. The Rangers are supported by the Street Scene Team in Communities and Environment who planned the day and support the Rangers in all their work across Gateshead.

Economic value of **£780** Into the community of Gateshead from this project.

## Example 6 – World Pay, Lunch Group Teams Life Centre

World Pay sent a team of 12 employees along to a volunteer day on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2018. The employee volunteers were there for 4 hours. The team got straight on with the tasks at the well-attended Teams Life Centre.

The tasks on the day itself included:

- Helping prepare the food
- Serving all food to all people attending
- Helping people to get refreshments and to a seat
- Chatting to those who attended and listening to their stories
- Helping to clear up after the lunch group
- Helping to put everything away
- Some other tasks around the centre that needed some volunteer input.

The group and the project where they attended were all more than happy with the day and would all like to repeat it in the future.



Economic value of **£1,248** into the community of Gateshead from this project.

## **Example 7 – Sage, volunteer day, AJ Cooks Sheltered Accommodation Scheme 2018**

On Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2018 Sage assigned 20 new apprentice employees to the AJ Cooks Sheltered Accommodation scheme within Rowlands Gill.

The employee volunteers split into two groups. 10 of the volunteers painted the communal lounge as well as the hallways and 10 of the volunteers tidied the immediate garden area and cleared the front path to the building.

The project was identified by the Gateshead Housing Company as a priority project. This is the third Sheltered Accommodation scheme to be painted as part of group volunteering.

The opportunity encouraged the residents to get involved and to welcome the volunteers along. A drop-in session was organised by the scheme officer in the week commencing 24<sup>th</sup> September. The session informed residents what was happening, information about the organisation and what would be the result of them coming along.

The residents were also present on the day making teas and coffees for those who took part and talking to the volunteers. This enabled the volunteers to fully understand first-hand the impact that this type of project has on the community direct.

Not only did this project have a very positive impact on residents, however it also enabled the team of 20 employees to take part in a group activity. The volunteers were all brand new recruits to the organisation and enabled them to work together as an initial induction project.

Sage also purchased all the equipment that was used on the day as well as the paint itself.

This option is offered to all corporate organisations as part of group volunteering and encouraged wherever possible.

Economic value of **£2,500** into the community of Gateshead from this project.

## **Example 8 – Gateshead Archive – Digital Library volunteer role 2018/2019**

Gateshead Central Library have submitted the final application for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The bid will now be considered by the panel who will decide on the project.

As part of this process, representatives from the submissions panel will meet with key members from the employee team, volunteers and community at the Central Library in Gateshead. This is to specifically discuss the new Gateshead Archive project.

A decision will be made shortly after 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

As part of this project the Friends of Gateshead Archive group has been established. The group informally meet on a Tuesday to give out information above the project and recruit volunteers who would like to be involved in a variety of different ways.

Volunteering tasks and areas include:

- Helping with the collection management such as cataloguing and scanning
- Doing research for planned projects like the touring exhibition
- Learning how to interview someone for the oral history collection
- Advising users who are stuck with their family history
- Planning (or attending) talks and activities for community history support sessions
- Event support
- Promotional activities
- Fundraising

## **Example 9 – Age UK Gateshead New volunteer roles 2018**

Age UK Gateshead have developed several new volunteer roles which are now active in Gateshead.

The volunteer roles include:

- Day centre activity organiser
- Day centre helper
- Minibus Driver
- Volunteer cook
- Dementia care assistant
- Passenger assistant
- Bereavement support volunteer
- Telephone befriender
- Friendship group volunteer
- Face to face befriender
- LGBT Group coordinator
- Living well & beyond cancer support

The Telephone Befriender role, in particular is a new project which will enable the volunteer to provide some much-needed contact to an elderly person who may not have any family or friends around them.

Based on a similar principal to that of the ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour) volunteer telephone support delivered by Community Safety within Gateshead Council, the volunteer would contact the individual and provide regular phone calls and chat to them about how they are feeling and general conversation. The volunteer will receive training from Age UK to enable them to be able to identify any areas of concerns and sign post the individual to support services.

The volunteers will receive regular feedback from the projects volunteer coordinator to ensure that any issues or concerns are raised and dealt with accordingly.

This project has been developed using best practice from other volunteer roles including the one delivered by Community Safety. This demonstrates how sharing experiences and examples within the sector can improve volunteer opportunities and services provided.

For further information the roles and other roles available please refer to the link below.

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/2875/Volunteering-opportunities>

A number of our registered volunteers have already declared an interest in becoming a volunteer in one of more of these roles with Age UK Gateshead. There are also those volunteers who have contacted the organisation direct about becoming a volunteer.



## **Example 10 – Byte Night, Action for Children, Corporate Sleep out**

From before they are born until they are into their twenties, Action for Children help disadvantaged children across the UK.

Action for Children help through fostering or adoption and by intervening early to stop neglect and abuse. Action for Children also help benefit children with disabilities and influence policy and advocate for change.

Their 7,000 staff and volunteers operate over 600 services, improving the lives of 370,000 children, teenagers, parents and carers every year. They succeed by doing what's right, doing what's needed, and doing what works for children.

Action for Children are delivering their biggest annual fundraiser on **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October** across 12 locations within the UK including Gateshead.

The event has now grown to 12 and over 1,500 people slept out in 2017. Byte Night is one of the UK's top 20 mass participation charity events and is the largest corporate sleepout having raised over £10 million since the first event.

Byte Night's success is all down to its volunteers and it simply could not happen without their help and hard work on the day itself. The recruitment has already started for the volunteer army needed to support the large corporate sleepout in Gateshead.

There are many roles that will need supported on the night, from registration of people taking part to raffle ticket selling and working the finance desk. There are also three different shift times across the day including set up, reception and the sleepout shift itself.

The Gateshead event will be hosted outside of The Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, South Shore Road, Gateshead NE8 3BA.

Further information can be found on the Action for Children Site:

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/how-to-help/fundraising-events/byte-night/volunteer-at-byte-night/>

This volunteer role has been shared using the usual communication networks for volunteering. It has also been emailed out to all employees within the Council and will be involved in Council info.

There has been a large interest from our registered volunteers as well as those who have approached Action for Children direct about the opportunity.

### **Example 11 – SENIT Low Incidence Team, Dryden Centre, Deaf Role Model within Schools**

This volunteer role will operate across Gateshead in both primary and secondary schools and would involve providing support to children and young people who are deaf.

The role would be an informal buddy type support role with the volunteer meeting with the individuals and providing an informal befriending type role. Any volunteer delivering this volunteer role will need a minimum of BSL (British Sign Language) Level 3.

Volunteers would also need the following skills and qualifications:

- Can inspire and motivate others sharing their own personal experiences both positive and negative and how their own personal goals have been achieved
- help children and young people to develop positive attitudes about deafness, broaden their understanding of deafness from the perspective of lived experience, and increase knowledge of helpful tips and strategies.
- Capable of delivering unbiased information (respectful of family values, culture and choice of communication method).
- Committed to supporting young deaf children and young people through a regular programme, encouraging them to achieve their full potential.
- Good communication skills
- Friendly and approachable
- Flexible
- Understanding of confidentiality
- Current drivers licence

Volunteers must be Deaf with SBL as their first language. A full DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) Check will be required which the volunteer coordinator for this project will support individuals through.

A full driving license is required and access to a car as the role involves travel between different schools.

Further information on this particular volunteer role can be found at [www.gateshead.gov.uk/volunteering](http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/volunteering) this volunteer role was shared using the usual communication channels for volunteer roles however was also shared direct with NHS services who may have contact with that target volunteer group.