

TITLE OF REPORT: Helping Out Volunteer Plan – Annual Update

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Summary

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

Introduction

This report provides information about the plan, number of volunteers, the types and examples of volunteer roles, examples of group volunteer projects 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).

Background

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 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.

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. There are now 2,825 volunteers registered with Gateshead Council (originally 50 in 2013 and 1,978 in 2018). 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 area, social care, health & sport and community centres.
7. Corporate volunteer days continue to grow in demand, with a total of over 125 individual organisations requesting tailored bespoke volunteer days supporting an estimated 2,500 individual employee volunteers (as at 2019). The economic value to the Gateshead community is estimated at £219,995.

Examples of these days can be found at:

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/2885/Case-studies>

8. Gateshead's seventh Volunteers' Month took place in June 2019. Throughout June 128,199 hours were recorded on the volunteer totaliser which equates to £1,666,587 economic value for 2019. That's an increase of 15,048 hours over the month and an increase of economic value of £195,624 from the figures in 2018.
9. In 2019 the funding available for Volunteers Month was incorporated into the main Thrive Fund. Grants of between £250 - £3,000 are available to support groups in different areas including volunteering. Projects can be delivered at any time and unlike previous years are not confined to June. This provides groups with more flexibility for their projects and activities. Information about the Thrive Fund can be found using the following link;

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/2887/The-Gateshead-Thrive-Fund>

10. For the first time The Gateshead Awards were held in June this year to link into Volunteers Month and increase the recognition of volunteers. The awards were held on the evening of Wednesday 12th June. The Gateshead Awards highlight the huge investment into the community from volunteers and voluntary groups. There are several categories including; volunteer and voluntary organisation of the year. A winner in each category was announced on the night. This year's winners and photographs from the evening can be viewed using the link below:

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/11955/Gateshead-Award-winners-2019>

11. One of the key areas this year has been Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) highlighting how private sector organisations assign their employees to volunteer projects in Gateshead through Helping Out Volunteer Days.
12. The Helping Out Volunteer Days involve any activities that a voluntary group would benefit from including gardening, painting and even website development.

The activities are all delivered over one day. Examples of Corporate Helping Out days can be found in paragraph 7 above.

World Transplant Games 2019

13. From October 2018 (following the previous OSC report) until the end of April 2019, NMV coordinated the recruitment of 600+ volunteers to support the World Transplant Games 2019. Without these volunteer roles including; accommodation & hospitality, sports events & venues, social & cultural programme, marketing and PR, transport, logistics, and Health & Safety the Games could not be delivered.
14. The Games were delivered across Gateshead, Newcastle and Sunderland and were managed overall by Sport & Leisure employees within Gateshead Council. The Games were live from 17th August 2019 – 23rd August 2019.
15. The results of the World Transplant Games can be seen by using the link below

<https://wtgf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/WTG2019-results.pdf>

Key areas of work moving forward:

Gateshead Volunteer Recruitment

16. The Volunteers Plan and systems for the management of volunteer 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.
17. 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 community organisations co-ordinate their own volunteering opportunities and have their own systems.
18. Following some research in 2018 and earlier, it was determined that an online system for volunteer recruitment would be the most effective for volunteers, organisations, voluntary groups and Council Officers in Gateshead.
19. A specification is currently being developed following Gateshead Council's procurement process to identify the most suitable provider to create a bespoke online database. External Funding has been sourced by NMV to fund this.

Corporate Volunteering

20. As discussed above in paragraphs 7, 11 & 12, Corporate Volunteering has continued to increase over the last few years. The demand from corporate organisations for community volunteer days has dramatically increased in 2019 and is expected to continue. The benefits of involving groups of corporate

volunteers will continue to be disseminated to the voluntary sector. The main benefits include:

- volunteers become aware of the communities they serve
- projects are provided with physical input from a number of volunteers at one time with immediate outcomes
- potential for individual volunteers to become interested in the project and come back to volunteer longer term of their own accord
- groups are often able to donate the equipment that they use on the day to the group e.g. paint brushes etc. or provide a financial donation to the project for hosting the day
- corporate organisations can become more aware of a voluntary group and help towards wider initiatives such as collections of clothing that they have longer term.

21. Wider development work into the corporate business sector of Gateshead is needed. This will ensure that the aims of organisations Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Policies and the projects that are developed are aligned. This would make the development work around group volunteering much more effective and beneficial.

Further engagement with Trade Unions & partners

22. Development work of council volunteer roles continues to involve engagement with Trade Unions & partners. This will ensure that volunteer roles do not encroach into the role of employees.

Gateshead Council Employer Volunteering Scheme

23. The Gateshead Council Employee Volunteering Policy enables 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 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>

24. There are currently 78 individual employees registered as volunteers through the scheme. This has increased by 11 since 2018. This is made up of individual volunteers as well as teams of volunteers.

25. In 2019 only 2 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 2019 specifically.

26. 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.

27. Promotional activity will continue in 2019/2020 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. Activities to develop this further can include promotion in council employee info and updates via Team management meetings.

Environmental Friends of Groups

28. There are currently an estimated 47 Friends of Groups (FOG) at various locations throughout Gateshead. With an average of 15 members per group this is an estimated 705 individual volunteers supporting Gateshead's Environmental open spaces.
29. These groups have continued to grow and have their own aims and objectives as well as support needs.
30. Communication between internal service areas has enabled a joint process to be implemented by NMV, Street Scene, Insurance and the active Unions (Unison and GMB). Working together officers determine the best solution and a bespoke package of support.
31. In the previous OSC report an issue around Public Liability Insurance of Environmental Friends of Groups was raised. This has now been addressed as explained below.
32. Working closely with Emma Batey from Insurance, and the service areas mentioned above a central form has been implemented. This is to prevent several emails being sent between the various parties to comment on each FOG.
33. The form provides all relevant information needed by service areas. NMV take on the coordination of the form. Once complete it is circulated to relevant officers for approval.
34. Once all parties are happy with the content of the form and have given their sign off, a Confirmation letter will be sent to the Friends of Group. This Confirmation Letter will detail all approved activities, requirements of the group, hard copies of each of the risk assessments and named contacts moving forward.

Friends of Group Conference

35. As mentioned as an action in the previous Volunteer OSC report the first Environmental Friends of Groups Conference was held on 11th April 2019 at the Dryden Centre. Street Scene and NMV jointly developed the content of the conference and delivered workshops.
36. The feedback from the event was very positive. From the 32 attendees and 24 completed feedback forms. 75% of the returned questionnaires stated that they thought the day was well organised and beneficial.

37. The main three things that attendees took from the day include; networking, overall number of volunteers in Gateshead, and positive support from council officers. The conference will be delivered bi-annually moving forward.

Future Actions

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

- Work with a suitable provider to tailor 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 generate specific reports to monitor volunteering which can be reported back to OSC at a later date.
- Continue promotion of the Employee Volunteering Scheme specifically group volunteer opportunities for teams of Council employees
- Look to refresh the application forms for the Employee Volunteering Scheme to remove any barriers to applying
- Development work with the Private Business Sector of Gateshead to determine Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies aims and align them to project development.
- Continue development work and promotion of individual & group volunteering with corporate organisations and provide links to the voluntary sector
- Creation of new group projects using one central form. These will include proposed projects for volunteers and those for community service.
- Continued development of volunteering opportunities on Gateshead Council website and 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 sixth forms and secondary schools as well as youth groups
- Continue to provide lead support for volunteering within the Voluntary & Community sector as well as for Council Service projects and roles.
- Continue development work with Environmental Friends of Groups including training needs, insurance issues, continued networking with services including insurance, Street Scene & Unions and the bi-annual Friends of Group Conferences.
- Re-establishment of the Volunteer Action Group. A new group will include Gateshead Council Volunteer Coordinators, as well as those from the Voluntary Sector to enable better communication and contacts to develop naturally.
- Continue working relationships with Trade Unions regarding the creation of further volunteering opportunities and FOG's.
- Development work around training in general for volunteers from a central resource point.

- Detailed Annual timetable to be provided highlighting volunteer events and significant dates for projects etc. which will be available on Gateshead Council's website and OurGateshead.
- Development of certificate and presentation to enable recognition of long serving council volunteers and The Gateshead Awards 2020 onwards.

Recommendations

39. 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 38.

Volunteer Case Studies 2019

Helping hands – Volunteer Group

Helping Hands is a group of volunteers that attend projects and deliver volunteer support. They receive support from New Vision Training which is a user- led enterprise run by seven people with a learning disability, they formed in 2004.

New Vision have a proven track record with three national awards for providing inspirational training that promotes the rights, choices and inclusion of people with learning disabilities.

The group created The Volunteer Crew in early 2019 to help out in volunteer projects that the members of the group would vote on.

By creating the Volunteer Crew New Vision are enabling people with disabilities who would other wise be isolated to come together and make a difference in their community.

This aims to empower people to make decisions, have a say and a valued role leading to an increased sense of achievement, community and citizenship. This project fits well with the brokerage service Neighbourhood Management & Volunteer provide. Moving forward the Volunteer Crew are presented with a number of different group opportunities by NMV to choose from.

The Volunteer Crew have currently being involved in:

- Team building
- Receruitment
- Training in first aid
- Health and safety
- Planning for other volunteer projects.

Some of participants of the group have stated

“Volunteering is about being able to help others”

“Volunteering helps you to meet new people and make new friends”

“It is good to do something new”.

Photos are included below.



Sage, Corporate Volunteer Days

Sage regularly send employee volunteers to volunteer days through the brokerage services provided by Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering.

For example, on Wednesday 11th September 2019, 12 Sage employee volunteers attended Gateshead Redheugh Football Club.

The volunteers helped the community group by painting the changing rooms and the main walk way at the venue.

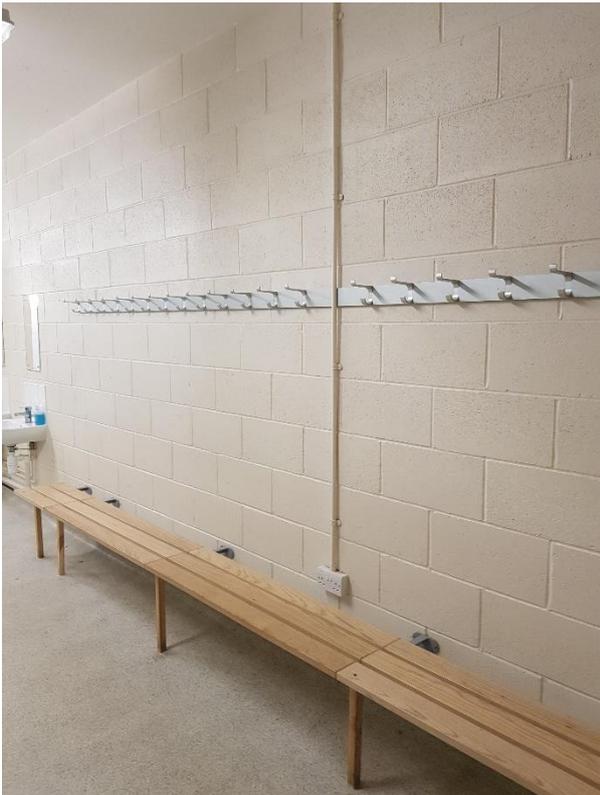
The volunteers spent the full day at the project and were extremely welcoming and friendly. The volunteers spent the day painting and were able to find out more about what the group provide to their local community and residents of Gateshead.

As well as offering their time Sage also purchased the paint for the project, which the group themselves would have had to wait a long time to have the spare funds to purchase. The project has had a huge positive impact, with the project lead Terry Ritson explaining:

“All of the volunteers on the day done an amazing job, they are all a credit to Sage. They worked extremely hard all day and Gateshead Redheugh would like to personally say thank you to all of them. Our changing rooms and corridor are now a much brighter place to be in”.

The economic invest for this project is calculated at £1,548 into the community of Gateshead.

Photographs are included below.



Case Study – Employee Volunteering

Vicki Mcleod is currently employed in Education Support Services at the Dyrden Centre.

Vicki was aware of the Employee Volunteering Scheme for Gateshead Council Employees, however she didn't realise that employees could claim up to 15 paid hours to further their volunteering. It was something that was also present but never seemed relevant to anything she was doing.

Vicki became interested in volunteering in the World Transplant Games 2019 that was promoted through early 2019 in Gateshead including through the Council promotional activities.

Vicki contacted NMV to ask how to become involved and what application form would be needed. After a brief discussion Vicki was reminded that she could claim up to 15 hours paid leave that would need to match with 15 hours of her own time.

Vicki submitted both an application form to volunteer for the Games and the information needed to claim the 15 hours paid leave.

This resulted in Vicki only needing to take 2 days annual leave and she was able to claim 2 days paid leave through the employee volunteering scheme.

Vicki was involved in an Event volunteer role, Hotel Liaison role, and a General Event Volunteer based on the Gateshead side of the Quayside.

Vicki enjoyed the experience of the Games and enjoyed the roles she was involved in. The Employee Volunteering Scheme enabled a Council Employee to become involved in a World Wide project being delivered in Gateshead and only needing to take 2 days annual leave for 4 days involvement.

Vicki explained that she was able to:

“Learn new skills, meet people from different cultures, and have a better understanding of transplant issues, while supporting an international events in Gateshead, and promoting Gateshead as a great place to visit”.

Felling Food Network – Volunteers

The Felling Food Network was set up by residents, Councillors and supported by Garry Stamp a Community Engagement Officer from Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering.

The Felling Food Network was established to provide a weekly three day emergency food parcel distribution point for local people experiencing food poverty in Felling. The project operates from the Felling Community Centre, beneath Crowhill Towers on a Wednesday between 12 noon and 2pm.

The Felling Food Network does not need referrals. People can walk in to the centre without needing any permission. Individuals are asked to provide some basic details, then they will be accompanied by a volunteer to choose what items they would benefit from.

The Felling Food Network provides:

- 3 day food parcels for individuals or families
- allows people to choose their own food for the parcel
- no need for any referral
- there is no time limit on need

The group provide quality food parcels one day each week and also provide practical support for people who need a little extra help. The group also aim to provide refreshments while the group is active.

In order to ensure that Felling Network were able to deliver the project, extra volunteers were identified through the current central process in NMV. Two suitable volunteers were identified from the many that came forward. Using their information, skills and experience these two volunteers were highlighted as the best matched to the role.

Both of these volunteers were sent over to the group and have been and still are committed to the project and return each week to help deliver the project. Garry Stamp continues to support the project in whatever way possible.

Photographs of the project are provided below.





Christmas Shoe Box Appeal

During the festive period Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering coordinate a Christmas collection of donations to help ensure some of Gateshead's most vulnerable residents receive a present at Christmas.

For the 2018 project a collection point was available at the Civic Centre from 12th November until 12th December.

As well as individuals donating items community groups, schools and businesses also helped with their own collections.

Donations were received from the following;

- Sheltered Accommodation Schemes across Gateshead
- Rowlands Gill Primary School
- Shipley Art Gallery
- Oakfield Infant School
- Riverside Primary School
- The Hub at Birtley
- Teleperformance
- Tarmac
- Barley Mow Village Hall
- St Aiden's school
- St Wilfred's Catholic Primary School
- St Leonards Secondary School in Durham.

The items requested as part of the collection drive included:

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

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Low Fell hosted the wrapping event as they have in previous years. This year the evening was hosted on Wednesday 12th December 2018. Church members and over 60 volunteers including almost 20 Council and Gateshead Housing Company employees helped wrap all the presents throughout the evening.

Followed by a full turkey Christmas Dinner meal cooked by the church for all volunteers. There were also employees of Wilmot Dixon, Teleperformance and Interserve there at the event.

This year over 450 packages were wrapped and prepared. NMV then distributed these packages out to all those groups & organisations that support people most in need in Gateshead. Some of the organisations who received these gifts to distribute included:

- Salvation Army
- Peace of Mind
- Young People Leaving Care of Gateshead Council
- Birtley Hub
- Whickham School (individual students)
- St Chad's
- Gateshead Council Change Team (individuals and families)
- Bensham Food Coop
- Lobley Hill Food Coop
- Homelessness Services
- Adult and Family Social Services (individuals and families)
- Changing Lives
- Lads & Dads

Some photographs of the evening are included below.





This project has an estimated economic value of £6,840

This project will return in 2019.

The collection points will open from the first week in November 2019 and the wrapping event will provisionally be held on Wednesday 4th December 6:00pm – 9:00pm. The Church of Latter Day Saints will once again be offering their much appreciated help by hosting the wrapping event.

Felling Volunteer Library – Volunteers

Felling Volunteer Library operates from

58 High Street,
Town Centre
Gateshead
NE10 9LT
0191 433 6402

Felling Volunteer Library is a community library run by Trustees and other Volunteers. They are on the High Street, in the heart of Felling and hope to be a focal point for the whole local community.

Anyone who use the library are always met with a very warm welcome.

The volunteer library have an extensive range of non-fiction and fiction books for all ages, free wifi, talking books on CD, Large print Books, and a range of daily newspapers

They also have a children's library with regular events and holiday activities.

Members of the public are welcome to use the groups scanning and photocopying facilities for a small charge.

The group rely upon regular committed volunteers. The Trustess asked NMV to match any more suitable volunteers to their requirements. Two volunteers have been matched to the library, one of which is now volunteering two shifts per week with the possibility of doing more once fully trained.

