

TITLE OF REPORT: Volunteer Plan – Annual Update

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

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 2013-17.

This report provides information about the number of volunteers, the types of volunteer roles, case studies (appendix 1) and the impact of volunteering in Gateshead's communities. The report also includes priority areas for future action.

Introduction

1. Vision 2030, the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy, sets out six big ideas to help achieve the vision for Gateshead. One of the big ideas is Gateshead Volunteers, enabling everyone to make a recognised contribution to their community. Gateshead volunteers has been a council priority since 2007 when Vision 2030 was agreed and is founded upon a strong history of volunteering in Gateshead, creating stronger communities.
2. Vision 2030, Gateshead Volunteers, seeks to achieve the following outcomes:
 - a. The voluntary and community sector thrives within Gateshead
 - b. Vibrant, sustainable communities through a culture of supporting community and voluntary sector organisations in the delivery of local services
 - c. Volunteering recognised as important in career development
 - d. Volunteering frameworks that help volunteers develop their skills
 - e. Gateshead known as a national leader in promoting and supporting volunteering
 - f. Social responsibility is achieved through local businesses participating in supporting volunteers.
3. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/2017-2020/2021 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.
4. The Council Plan 2015-2020 identifies "Gateshead Volunteers" as one of our six big ideas focused on people and places.

5. Gateshead Council Volunteers Plan 2013-17 provides a strategic and structured approach to volunteering in Gateshead. The plan ensures that volunteers are supported effectively in areas such as training, skills, expenses and health and safety so that the principles of volunteering are not undermined.

Progress to date

6. The volunteer plan (2013) originally identified five objectives to be achieved, these included:
 - Enable everyone to make a recognised contribution to their community and become the volunteering capital of England
 - Deliver economic growth and wellbeing
 - Volunteering activity adds value to local service provision, enabling neighbourhoods to have services that would not otherwise be provided and enhancing core public services.
 - Increase formal volunteering from 18% to 25% by 2017
 - Increase informal volunteering from 34% to 40% by 2017
7. Since the volunteers plan was first launched in 2013 there has been an increase in volunteering from 4,426 to 8,065, an 82% increase. This is the estimate of volunteers in each volunteering area (paragraph 16 refers) that provides an estimate of volunteering activity using the intelligence available.
8. Registered Council volunteers have increased from 50 to 1,687 which is a 3274% since the volunteers plan was launched in 2013.
 - 2013 – 50 centrally registered volunteers
 - 2014 – 490 centrally registered volunteers
 - 2015 – 891 centrally registered volunteers
 - 2016 – 1,417 centrally registered volunteers
 - 2017 – 1,687 centrally registered volunteers.
9. Corporate Volunteer Days continue to grow in demand, 1,190 volunteers have taken part in corporate and group volunteering activity. Throughout 2016/2017 the estimated economic value to the Gateshead community of corporate and group volunteering activity is estimated at £123,863. (Examples of corporate and group volunteering are described further at paragraph 28).
10. The Residents Survey 2012 (sample of 3,800) 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%
11. The Residents Survey in 2016 (sample of 906 residents) demonstrated the targets set for informal and formal volunteering have been achieved. Although based on a smaller sample (survey in 2013 based on 3,800) the information is still valid as the results have been weighted.

- Formal volunteering target of an increase to 25% achieved 51.9% this is a 188% increase on the target
 - Informal volunteering target of an increase to 40% achieved 67% this is a 97% increase on the target
12. Volunteering continues to grow and as it becomes better understood, there is now an opportunity to create a new plan and approach in 2018 which would include new partnerships, new processes, a new system and new volunteering principles whilst recognising current and forthcoming budgetary challenges for the council and the communities within Gateshead.
13. Officers continue to monitor activities within communities and volunteering, recording the number of volunteers now occurs regularly. Communities in Gateshead continue to develop and evolve and therefore Volunteering demands continue to increase. As the volunteer plan ends there is a need to develop new systems, embrace technology and approaches to ensure that volunteering support meets the future demands placed on the council.

Volunteer Recruitment

14. Since 2013 there has been a single point of access to volunteering with Gateshead Council. All documentation and an outline of the process are available online:

<https://intranet.gateshead.gov.uk/article/2163/Recruitment-of-volunteers-into-the-council>

15. The Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering Team currently support over 100 groups and organisations from Gateshead's VCS around the development of volunteer roles and matching of suitable volunteers. There isn't another organisation that currently provides this support. The number of voluntary and community groups requesting support and accessing our service continues to increase. Currently there are over 200 volunteer roles available for individuals to choose from. All of these volunteer roles can be found on the Gateshead Council website in the link below. Support is tailored to the needs of each community organisation making a request.

<http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/People%20and%20Living/Volunteering/opportunities.aspx>

16. The current estimate of the number of volunteers across council services and within the voluntary and community sector is as follows:

- Community Links – 60
- Countryside & Environment – 500
- School Governors – 1,200
- General School Volunteers - 900
- Community Centres – 800
- Youth Offending Team – 25
- Youth Council – 30
- Children Centres – 50
- VCS Organisations and others – 1,000
- Sports – 400

- Heritage, Events & general Culture - 500
- Libraries – 800
- Employee Volunteers – 50
- Private Sector Employee Volunteers – 250
- Jewish Community 1,500

Total – 8,065

17. The above numbers enabled a basic baseline figure of volunteers to illustrate the initial shape of the sector. Prior to this (2013) no information existed on the VCS. Following the Volunteers Plan implementation there is gradually knowledge being added to.

Further engagement with Trade Unions & partners

18. The TUC and Volunteering England produced a joint Charter entitled Strengthening Relations between paid staff and volunteers. The Charter makes it clear that volunteering is distinct from paid work. The Council's Volunteers Plan principles endorse and supports this. All Gateshead Council volunteer roles compliment and do not substitute those performed directly by paid staff.

19. The distinction between paid workers and volunteers is set out in the charter. Volunteering is any activity or role in the community for which someone undertakes a specific task but receives no payment. Volunteers freely give their own time to a task without financial recompense.

20. All volunteer roles are developed with the Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering Team, therefore all necessary checks are made to ensure that this is a suitable and viable volunteer role.

21. As volunteering increases working in partnership is becoming increasingly important to ensure effective and efficient working. The Council is also careful to ensure that there is clear delineation between volunteers and employees of the council. This ensures that volunteers and officers can work together. Gateshead Council's own definition of the two are:

22. Employee – a paid role in which an individual undertakes specific duties within their job description which contributes to the statutory function of Gateshead Council.

23. Volunteer – an unpaid role which adds value to the Councils statutory function by undertaking non statutory tasks.

24. As services continue to develop and provide volunteer roles, employees and volunteers continue to work alongside each other. The council coordinates much of this work through a steering group of officers where regular opportunities and information is disseminated and shared.

Gateshead Volunteers Month

25. Gateshead's fifth Volunteers' Month, took place in June 2017. The aim of Volunteers Month was to:

- Celebrate the positive contribution made by existing volunteers
 - Recruit more volunteers
 - Enable local people to contribute to their community
26. Throughout June, 106,189 hours were recorded on the volunteer totaliser which equates to £1,380,457 economic value. This is a 5% rise from last year.
27. £9,880 was allocated to 33 groups and organisations across Gateshead from the Volunteers' Month Grant Scheme which in a positive move was administered by the Community Foundation in 2017. Various events were held during the month long activities. These included community celebrations, festivals, volunteer days, training sessions and award ceremonies that gave recognition to the commitment made by Gateshead residents as well as other activities.

Group volunteering and Corporate Volunteering

28. To enable group volunteering to take place, a recruitment process has been utilised successfully. This enables volunteer activities to sit within the council's protocols and insurance policy for volunteering. This therefore avoids processing large numbers of individual requests.
29. The most popular group volunteer opportunities at present are environmental projects or decoration type tasks. These enable the teams of volunteers to undertake a task where the end result creates a visible and tangible impact in a community or within a building.
30. It is also predicted that more technical support projects will continue to become popular. This will involve groups of volunteers providing support with projects such as website development, social media, supporting preparation of books and accounts and other areas where particular skills can be offered.
31. The demand for group volunteer opportunities continues to grow with requests from external organisations steadily increasing. An economic investment of £123,863 has been calculated for Gateshead in 2016/2017. Each individual volunteer has an economic value £104 per day. This equated to 1,190 individual volunteers across the projects.
32. Examples include:
- Virgin Media, painting the main hall and outside at Barley Mow Centre & helping out at Chopwell Park amongst other volunteer days.
 - Costa Coffee sending volunteers to help out at Windy Nook Primary school including supporting the pupils to clear their pond area,
 - Gateshead College students supporting the AGM of Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly being held in Low Fell, this included hospitality tasks and customer services.
 - Young people from NCS (National Citizenship Service) involved in a large community litter pick around the Angel of the North
 - Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering Team helping out at Ferndene park and painting park benches.

33. Corporate and group volunteering enables team building amongst employees while operating in a different environment. It also enables an organisation to give something back to their own community of Gateshead.
34. When requests come into the Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering Team businesses are matched with a community group or organisation that requires volunteering assistance. In some cases this requires the creation of a bespoke package in partnership between all parties so that all expectations and needs as well as health and safety protocols are met.
35. This support is provided by the Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering Team and includes risk assessments, officer support on the day and follow up support as well as other areas that are deemed necessary.
36. Opportunities are available to organisations ranging from one off small group activities through to day long activities; however officers recognise that there is the potential to create longer term agreements depending on the needs of the parties involved.
37. Discussions continue with Virgin Media for example regarding how their volunteering opportunities can be embedded within Gateshead communities using their corporate employee volunteer commitment. Virgin Media currently request support with as many of their 500 employees as possible to be supported with a mixture of different group projects throughout the year.

Gateshead Council Employer Volunteering Scheme

38. In May 2014 the 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 employees 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>

39. There are currently 60 employees registered as volunteers through the scheme. This is made up of individual volunteers as well as teams of volunteers. This is a 73% increase from 2016. In early 2017 the forms used to process the requests were amended following feedback from active volunteers. Additional changes will be made if it is deemed necessary to open up the policy further.
40. Employees are involved in various volunteering projects, these range from one to one support projects through to employees participating in a wider group. These also range from individual volunteer roles where employees claim their paid leave to develop further, to those that volunteer as part of a team of volunteers as a "one off" taster session.
41. Individuals who claim paid leave to further their volunteering tend to already have a specific volunteer role that they are already delivering. However, if not, employees

can also be supported by Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering to identify a suitable volunteer role within the VCS of Gateshead.

42. The group projects that make up the taster sessions as part of the employee scheme are delivered in places such as community buildings but also in parks and open spaces. Many of which are undertaken in partnership with local community organisations working on community projects that benefit the wider community of Gateshead.
43. Further discussions with Senior Management Teams will focus on how to increase employee volunteering and to understand the barriers that prevent council employees from taking part.
44. There are also current proposals to include information around the Employee Volunteering Policy as a standing item on team briefs and other communication channels that go to all employees. This is with the aim of increasing participation from employees into the community of Gateshead.

Environmental Friends of Groups

45. Throughout Gateshead there are a number of different Friends of Groups that support the community and enable them to form informal Friends of groups to support with the maintenance and upkeep of Gateshead's open spaces and parks
46. There are currently an estimated 25 Friends of groups at various locations throughout Gateshead. With an average of 15 members per group this is an estimated 375 volunteers. These groups all have their own individual aims and objectives as well as support needs. 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.
47. A reoccurring barrier for these groups began to develop around public liability insurance. As the volunteers making up the Friends of Groups 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.
48. As the whole purpose of the Friends of Groups was to enable an informally founded group an immediate barrier existed. Rather than the Friends of Group becoming a formally constituted group and applying for their own Public Liability Insurance policy (which the majority of groups did not want to do) the FOG's were registered as groups of Gateshead Council volunteers as opposed to individual volunteers.
49. A procedure has been established and developed to enable Friends of Groups to register their volunteers and to receive tailored support around tasks within designated open spaces, equipment that is required, necessary training and any additional volunteers as well as any other area identified.
50. All Friends of Groups work to their own individual programme of tasks and activities supported through the Volunteer Coordinator for Countryside Rangers and Environmental activities.

51. With the refreshment of the Volunteers Plan leading up to and during 2018 this area of work will be further researched and responded to.

Northumbria University Students

52. Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering have been working with the Business Clinic based at Northumbria University. The team supported four students with a project to go towards the final mark of their Master's Degree.

53. The four students formed CBS (Creative Solutions for Business) Consultancy and evaluated the current volunteer recruitment process within Gateshead Council, over a three month period, to identify any improvements needed.

54. The final report was presented to Neighbourhood Management Team & Volunteering in September 2017 and is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

55. The main findings from the report concluded that the current volunteer recruitment process has some issues including:

- being outdated (being first implemented in 2013)
- is unable to deal with the fast flowing increase of volunteers
- will be unsustainable in the current format
- putting administration pressures on the one officer supporting the process

56. The main improvement identified is for the process to move to an online platform which would have profound benefits throughout the organisation.

57. This report and its findings will now feed into the work with Newcastle University students discussed below.

Newcastle University Students

58. Newcastle University are working with Gateshead to develop a bespoke online system for volunteer recruitment.

59. Open Lab is a cross-disciplinary research centre at Newcastle University, and is one of the world's leading research centres into human-computer interaction. This includes academics from the fields of computer science, design, engineering and social and health sciences.

60. Digital Civics is the application of technology to solve real-world problems, in areas ranging from health and social care to education and politics.

61. Open Lab's Digital Civics Initiative is a five-year activity funded by the EPSRC for which the Council, along with Newcastle City Council and Northumberland County Council, is a key partner. The partnership is multi-sector and includes organisations including Orange Labs, Microsoft Research, the Royal Town Planning Institute and Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE).

62. Open Lab is engaged in projects locally, nationally and internationally, for example supporting the Red Cross in the engagement of young people in local volunteering.

This work builds on Open Labs work in communities which has been embedded into parts of East Gateshead.

The aim of the new system will be to:

- Empower individuals to apply and take responsibility for their volunteering requests
- Empower community organisations to take responsibility for their volunteering needs, advertising, recruitment and selection
- Reduce the time taken for Volunteer applications to be processed by council officers
- Reduce the time taken for volunteers to be aligned to volunteer opportunities
- Create a system that provides users spatial information regarding volunteering activity and opportunities
- Create a system that can provide users with information based on theme, age, activity, skills, competency and time required
- Create a system that can manage the increase in volunteering requests that can be monitored by officers and users
- Use the system as the focal point to the next Volunteers Plan for Gateshead

Future Actions

63. There are a number of priority areas for future action which have been identified in the delivery of the Volunteers Plan:

- Create a new Volunteers Plan.
- Create a new management system to record volunteers, employee volunteers and volunteer hours contributed by voluntary groups as well as Council services, are collated in one location in partnership with Newcastle University.
- Continue promotion of the Employee Volunteering Scheme.
- Identify opportunities for group volunteering projects for teams
- Explore arrangements for joint working with other agencies and external organisations.
- Consider how volunteers can add further value to current services provided by Gateshead Council.
- Continue to develop and promote the corporate volunteer opportunities.
- Continue to provide lead support for volunteering with the Voluntary & Community sector as well as for council service projects and roles.
- Develop closer working relationships with Trade Unions regarding the creation of further volunteering opportunities.

Recommendations

64. 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 63.

Volunteer Case studies 2017

Example 1. Move to Improve week (March 2017)

Remaining physically active in older age may offer opportunities for maintaining or increasing independence. Daily routines involving walking to local shops may mean less reliance on others while at the same time promoting social and community interaction as well as combating social isolation. Physical activity helps to improve emotional and mental well-being and is associated with reduced symptoms of depression.

Working with the Gateshead Housing Company and all 38 Sheltered Accommodation Schemes across Gateshead, Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering delivered a "Move to Improve" week from Monday 20th March – Sunday 26th March 2017 with the main aim of improving the physical and mental health of residents as well as combating social isolation by developing key links between schemes.

The week long programme encouraged the development of individual activities by working with the Sheltered Accommodation Scheme Officers and responding to the needs of the residents.

A full online programme of events was promoted throughout the period leading up to and during the delivery of the week. This was also open to all members of the public. Scheme officers continuously promoted the events at the start of each day and asked for as many residents as possible to declare events that they would like to take part in. Transport issues were also worked through and officers worked across schemes to enable attendance by all.

Gateshead Leisure activities were also encouraged with free swimming sessions provided on set days throughout the week.

Some activities included: Bingo sessions, CPR Training, Fire Service awareness sessions, knitting groups (including a huge project to knit as many blankets for Babies ITU at QE hospital & Twiddle toys for dementia patients), men's health groups, Boccia league games, gardening projects and health talks amongst a whole range of other activities that residents identified for themselves. Included below are some photographs of the activities as they were delivered.

Organisations such as Thrive and Tyne & Wear Archives attended the schemes to deliver activities with the residents. Photos are included below.

The programme relied upon volunteers to be delivered successfully and has encouraged further involvement from residents and volunteers as a follow on.

In total the week long programme offered **187** activities which **1,720** people took part in.



Diabetes information session



Thrive Gardening session at Birtley Villas



Knit and Knatter group with their blankets and items for babies ICU at the QE hospital.



Rowlands Gill Tyne & Wear Archives Project with the tiles made by the residents detailing the history of Rowlands Gill

Example 2. Fill the Gap events (summer 2017)

Throughout the summer holiday period in 2017 Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering along with partner services and organisations, delivered another Fill the Gap programme.

The programme involves a number of key play activities and events being delivered across Gateshead in a variety of locations and dates to ensure that children have access to support and food throughout the school holiday period. This is aimed at those children who would usually utilise the free school meals to ensure that they receive at least one source of food a day.

One of the Council's registered volunteers, Leanne Forster, applied to become a volunteer with this particular activity.

Leanne volunteered for the full programme of activity for Peace of mind and attended sessions every Monday for 4 weeks at St Joseph's Church Hall. Leanne volunteered for an estimated 40 hours throughout the programme. This has the economic value of £520.

The event was aimed at the families of asylum Seekers from the central area of Gateshead and some of its surrounding areas. The events were supported financially by ward councillors from the Bridges Ward of Central Gateshead.

Leanne supported the event by assisting with the art and craft activities, helping with lunch, setting up and putting away after the event and more importantly mixing with the families on the day. Every event was attended by around 50 people (with many different languages) this included around 30 children. Leanne was a great help and developed a good relationship with the group.

Leanne also supported 3 sessions at St Mary's Heritage Centre. The events were aimed at supporting children who are young carers. The event was a joint effort by Gateshead Neighbourhood Management Team, St Mary's Heritage Centre and Gateshead Carers Trust. The event involved up to 18 children from age 6-11 and staff from Gateshead Carers Trust every week. Leanne was involved with supporting the children on guided walks along Newcastle/Gateshead quayside, various arts and a crafts throughout the weeks as well as helping the children feel comfortable and happy during every session. Gateshead Carers Trust reported that Leanne had been a fantastic help during the events with Leanne wanting to spend more time at Gateshead Carers Trust/Young Carers as a volunteer in the future.

Leanne also helped out at the Celebration event at Gateshead Leisure Centre on 1st September. Leanne has recently applied for a job and the team have provided the potential employers with a character reference.



Leanne Forster volunteering at the Peace of Mind event.

Example 3. Comfrey Project

The Comfrey Project is a registered charity which works with refugees and asylum seekers on allotment sites across Gateshead with the aim of improving their conditions of life and general wellbeing. Included below are 2 examples of volunteers from the project and the impact it has had on them:

Mr S

Mr S, 50, originally came from Pakistan and has been part of the Comfrey Project for five years.

Mr S enjoyed coming to the Project as he liked the physical work. Digging for exercise, he said, was good for his body and he felt in better physical and mental shape after having done three hours hard work in the garden. Mr S not only worked in the garden, but also cooked for others at the allotments, his curries becoming very popular.

Raising two teenage children as a single parent, Mr S used his time at the Project to improve his English language skills while awaiting a decision on his asylum claim. Unfortunately one of his children was returned to Pakistan on his eighteenth birthday, but his 16 year old daughter, who wants to be a soldier or in the police force, is a volunteer at many community events, and an Army Cadet.

Hard working, generous, kind, with time for everyone, Mr S and his daughter received their right to remain earlier in 2017 and Mr S is now working full-time while going to college in his spare time.

Mrs J

Mrs J came to the UK as a refugee in 2010, and has been at the Comfrey Project for seven years. She has a teenage daughter and son, and one small child under ten.

Mrs J comes from a family of restaurateurs and chefs in Sri Lanka, and immediately took to organising the daily lunches of our gardeners, working from the small sheds at our allotments or the kitchen at Windmill Hills, our community garden. Cooking with donated foods or produce grown in our garden, often with no prior knowledge of what is available until she arrives on site, Mrs J organises a kitchen and a number of volunteer cooks to produce fresh, home cooked, vegetarian food for up to forty participants.

Over the past seven years, Mrs J has prepared over fourteen thousand lunches, always with a smile, and with utmost professionalism. Having received her right to remain in 2004 she has now set up her own Sri Lankan catering business, supplying snacks and catering for community events.

Example 4. Volunteers Month (June 2017) volunteers

During Volunteers Month 2017 the TyneWear Skills project received a small grant of £300 to deliver a volunteer open event to aim to increase the number of volunteers active at the organisation. The below are quotes from two young people who volunteered as a direct result of volunteers month.

"I started volunteering with the charity during volunteer's month. The charity has supported me to gain level 2 qualifications and gain vital experience of working with young people with a variety of needs. I am now really enjoying my role as a youth worker working with a fantastic organisation that works across the North East."

Rebecca - aged 21

"I started to volunteer with the charity to give me experience. I was made very welcome from the first session and it is something different every time I volunteer. The group members are great and I find the whole experience very rewarding. "

Lewis - aged 20

Example 5. Volunteers Month (June 2017), Woodgreen.

Residents at the Sheltered Accommodation Scheme based at Woodgreen in Bill Quay, were successful in their application to the Community Foundation for a Volunteers Month Grant of £300. The Scheme keeps chickens on the site that are looked after by the residents. This is through the Hen Power Programme.

With the funding that was awarded the residents held a volunteer day and encouraged friends and families of residents (as well as any additional volunteers who were interested) to help improve the site around the scheme. Tasks included painting the Chicken coops, painting some of the fences and handrails, tidying up the gardens, placing new gravel down and other general tasks. Members of the Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering Team supported the group.

All involved were very positive about the event. Included below is a photo of part of the activities. The tiles pictured were created by the residents themselves.



Example 6. Paul Murray, The Birtley Hub

The Birtley Hub is a valuable resource centre for the local community in Birtley. They offer ; free internet access and computer use, low cost printing and photocopying, free I.T assistance and technical support, help to individuals with job searches and CV writing, information about local services and will point you in the right direction when needing advice.

The Hub also has a café area offering very reasonably priced refreshments and arranges trips, social events and activities. The Hub itself relies upon invaluable volunteers to deliver the high level of community support that they do. One of these volunteers is Paul Murray.

Paul has volunteered with the group for 3 years. He travels all the way from central Gateshead 3 times a week to volunteer with the organisation. Anything that needs doing Paul is always there. He is constantly busy and actively seeking for things to do. Paul has a Learning Difficulty but this has proved to be no barrier for him. He is a valuable and extremely hard working member of the team at Birtley Hub.



Example 7. Leeds Building Society (Corporate Volunteering) June 2017

Leeds Building Society sent a total of 14 employees over to Gateshead to deliver two separate volunteer days.

The first team attended Kays Cottages (Sheltered Accommodation Scheme) in Windy Nook to undertake some basic gardening type tasks. Even though the weather wasn't very good the team of employees got stuck in and undertook some litter picking, edging, sweeping and general clearing.

Included below is a photograph of these employees.



The second team's volunteer day included employees of Leeds Building Society attending the Kateregina Sheltered Accommodation Scheme in Birtley. Volunteer roles on the day included assistance with the monthly lunch club, clearing away dishes, calling bingo numbers, assisting with the raffle and hoovering the lounge etc. after the event.

The employees really enjoyed both volunteer days and plan to do future events in 2018. The residents involved also had a very positive experience and are very grateful for their time and effort put into both projects.

Example 8. Handelsbanken Gateshead, June 2017

Handelsbanken Gateshead sent 8 of their employees along to Gateshead Older People's Assembly based in Deckham Gateshead for a volunteer day in June 2017. The volunteers were attending the organisation to clear their community allotment and enable service users to access the site following the initial clean-up day.

The full volunteer day consisted of; clearing the allotment site, weeding and removal of items currently on the land, cutting of grass and bushes to make space for the allotment, clearing of soil area to make way for fresh allotment items to be added into the space, and painting of small fenced area around the boundary of the allotment.

Both Gateshead Older People's Assembly and the Handelsbanken volunteers were very positive about the volunteer day.

Example 9. John Home, Young volunteer, July 2017

John is 20 years old and based in Whickham. John applied to become a registered volunteer in July 2017. John was keen to get involved in a volunteer role within the Central Library.

John is going to University to study to become a primary school teacher. His previous Teacher, Kath Flint, from Whickham secondary school explains:

"John is a fantastic student, whose work ethic is outstanding and really reflects just how passionate he is about extending his knowledge and learning in general. His enthusiasm is always clear within every lesson and his determination to succeed."

Kath continues to explain that John *"is an inspiration and should be celebrated."*

John's own determination in finding ways to develop his own skills has led to many work experience placements as well as additional volunteering.

Highlighting successful case studies like John's to other Gateshead students (and young people in general) helps to illustrate the impact volunteering can have on an individual, and makes the goals of volunteering more realistic for young people.

Example 10. Chris Murray, Barnardo's Volunteer, May 2017



Retired teacher Chris Murray first saw her volunteering role in Gateshead Council News and felt it was just what she was looking for. Chris worked in adult education for most of her career and for the last 10 years in dyslexia. The role she saw was working for the Gateshead SENDIAS Service, run by Barnardo's. SENDIAS stands for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support and the service helps the parents and carers of children with Special Educational Needs and disabilities (SEND) to understand the SEND system and what might be going on with their child. The service is also there for the children and young people themselves. Every Local Authority in the country has to have one and Gateshead LA out-sources theirs to Barnardo's who run it with the help of volunteers.

Chris explains, "I had just retired and was looking for something stimulating to do when I read about this volunteering opportunity in the local Council News. It looked perfect. I have a granddaughter with SEN and learning difficulties and know how hard it is for parents so it was something I was really interested in helping with. I also have a background in teaching. I have been doing the role for three years now and I really enjoy it. I like the flexibility and the variety. It is not the same every week. I enjoy supporting parents and I have learnt a lot, it is very interesting. I have to say that the training and support is very good and we are allowed to continue our professional development. I feel as though I am still mixing in the working world but in a more relaxed way."

The Gateshead SENDIAS Officer Elizabeth Lowery said, "Our volunteers are invaluable to the service, we simply could not provide the level of support to parents that we do without them. They build so much extra capacity into what we can offer. Chris has been an outstanding volunteer and done so much that last year we nominated her for a national Barnardo's award. She came second winning one of only two runner-up positions in the whole country. We are so grateful that she saw the role in the Local Council News three years ago and grateful for the support from Gateshead Council to promote our volunteer role."

Example 11. Friends of Group volunteering; Brighten Ryton

Environmental Friends of Groups continue to be a development stage of volunteering as discussed in paragraph 45.

In order to illustrate the positive impact the work of Friends of Groups can have, Brighten Ryton can be discussed as an example. Brighten Ryton are an umbrella community group representing a number of smaller Friends of Groups within the Ryton area. These include: Ryton Litter Action Group, Ryton Flowerbed Buddies, Ryton Heritage Group, Ryton Community Forum, Ryton Cemetery and memorial.

The group have been established since the end of 2016 and are active in a number of areas to further develop the Community of Ryton. In more ways than one Brighten Ryton came along and requested to deliver volunteering in ways no other Friends of Groups had before.

The group's main aim was to protect their heritage sites and green belts, and provide an opportunity to raise funds.

One of the main areas of identified needs of the local community was around Ryton Cemetery. The Friends of Group had identified a need for additional maintenance activities including grass cutting, and weeding etc. above and beyond the statutory provision for the area.

Working closely with volunteers from the group equipment has been provided, training delivered and processes established to cover all necessary public liability issues. This is not currently delivered in any other Cemetery within Gateshead and is a first in the borough.

Due to the joint partnership approach the group have been active in the area which has received very positive feedback from members of the public, Council members and others. While actively volunteering in December 2016 in the Cemetery the group asked 127 visitors to rate the area. A total of 126 people rated the area as either "outstanding" or "very good".

Included below are photographs to demonstrate the work of the group with before and after pictures.

Before volunteer work



After volunteer work



Before volunteer work



After volunteer work



Before volunteer work



After volunteer work

