

T 4 Training Final Report 2009-2011



Our thanks go to The Robertson Trust and the Scottish Government and the European Community,
Dumfries and Galloway LEADER 2007-2013 Programme

Background to the project

There are over 4000 volunteers registered with Volunteer Action, with over 350 volunteer involving organisations offering over 1000 individual opportunities to get involved with volunteering. While these are not static figures, we have found that there have been several organisations which are no longer running due to funding cuts, while others are emerging to offer new services. Our support for all the organisations and volunteers registered with Volunteer Action is ongoing and responsive.

During the 2 year project we planned to deliver a total of 9 workshops to 48 people from the Stewartry and Annandale & Eskdale areas of Dumfries & Galloway. The workshops included: REHIS Elementary Food & Health, REHIS Food Hygiene, OCN Volunteering in your Community and Pacific Institute STEPs to Excellence. A total of 14 workshops were delivered to 104 attendees – 72 different individuals, from a variety of locations across the 2 areas of Dumfries & Galloway.

1. How was the idea for the project developed?

Volunteer Action has delivered training to both volunteers and volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) since 1998. A limited amount of SkillCheck (skills audit software programme) and Preparing to Volunteer self-learn packs are provided as part of our Core provision. Previously any training for volunteers was informal and non-accredited, and limited according to funding restraints.

The training offered by Volunteer Action has increased since 2005 due to feedback from both volunteers and VIOs. In response to demand we have developed and offer a more extensive range of courses for volunteers that fit with potential volunteering roles. We have always been conscious of not duplicating provision, but rather filling the gaps for volunteers and training.

The demand for the courses available had been steadily increasing and while we had previously been in receipt of funding to deliver them in the Wigtownshire area our research suggested that the Stewartry and Annandale and Eskdale areas were missing out, but demand was proportionately as high.

2. Who was involved in the project? Individuals and Organisations.

Volunteers and volunteer involving organisations from the Stewartry and Annandale & Eskdale areas took part in the project.

Volunteer Action's Training & Support Officer, Training Assistant and 2 volunteers to support the project, were involved in the delivery, and Manager as per application.

3. What were the aims and objectives of the project?

This project planned to offer accredited training to volunteers in the Stewartry and Annandale & Eskdale areas of Dumfries & Galloway. Volunteers will gain new skills which benefit themselves, their health, their family and their community. The volunteers are registered with Volunteer Action D&G and/or involved with VIOs delivering services to communities in the Stewartry and Annandale & Eskdale.

This project will work at grassroots, providing a greater impact where people can make positive changes in their lives, and the lives of their families and friends.

The project aimed to:

- Integrate previously excluded volunteers. Individuals will feel less isolated socially
- Improve volunteers' knowledge of food, diet, meal planning and its impact on health. This will impact on individuals and family health and wellbeing, with a longer term impact of improved health with reduced risk of obesity, diabetes, coronary heart disease and some cancers.
- Provide an opportunity to participate in accredited formal learning to increase knowledge and develop new skills
- Improve confidence & self belief, enabling volunteers to be pro-active about their future, employment and health and future for their family
- Strengthen the capacity and skills of the volunteering sector



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- Strengthen communities, as volunteers become better skilled and confident
- Increase participation in community activities as volunteers confidence grows

4. How was the funding package assembled?

Initially several funding bids were worked on to match LEADER.

Volunteer Action In-kind contribution of £1152 for volunteer time given to the project and the Robertson Trust very generously donated the full amount required to match LEADER. (£8,110.50)

5. How much money did LEADER provide?

LEADER provided £9262.50

The project experience

6. When did the project take place?

The project took place from May 2009 – April 2011

7. What actually happened?

Challenges

1. During the first year of the project, recruitment to courses planned was limited when we were recruiting only from registered volunteers. As a result, during year two of the project we offered the training to volunteer involving organisations for their volunteers. This proved much more successful, with 3 courses recruiting 32 participants.

2. Staffing shortages over the project had a knock-on effect to when we were able to offer the courses, as the Training & Support Officer and other training staff were covering for these shortages. This meant that they didn't have their original capacity to organise and deliver the training.

Due to unforeseen circumstances within Volunteer Action (the unexpected death of a colleague) training in April could not take place. However, the staffing situation was resolved, meetings took place with several partner agencies and we were able to get back on track.

3. Young people – all volunteers registered with Volunteer Action are able to access the training courses. Many young people indicate that they are interested in the courses, but unfortunately we have had little success in recruiting them. This is partly due to some schools not releasing the pupils to attend, or the young people not wanting to give up their holiday time. This is not always the case as we had 2 young people at a course in Annan, who were released from school.

Progress/achievements/outputs

The courses were advertised on Volunteer Action website Learning & Practice page, and on VAD&G News webpage prior to the Learning & Practice page being up and running; items were included in Dalbeattie Matters newsletter; promoted through Community Learning & Development teams in both areas, and through Local Rural Partnerships, Council for Voluntary Services and over 300 organisations registered with Volunteer Action. A summary of the first course also appeared on Volunteer Action's website. Letters/information was circulated to A&E networks and VAD&G registered volunteers during the 3rd Quarter.

3 x volunteers (in-kind hours) have been supporting the project by helping to produce training packs, doing letter runs, course confirmations and production of certificates.

The project started 1 month later than originally anticipated due to a delay in the funding from Leader being agreed.

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A total of 14 workshops were delivered to 104 attendees – 72 different individuals, from a variety of locations across the 2 areas of Dumfries & Galloway.

Year Two proved to be much more successful than year one.



Volunteers from the STEPs and REHIS Elementary Food & Health courses with their certificates.

A STEPs course was delivered in June 2010, with 6 volunteers attending. In addition we programmed a range of courses to be delivered between September and Christmas 2010. These included: Workplace Befriender training (5 people attended), REHIS Elementary Food & Health course (11 people attended), REHIS Introduction to Health & Safety (3 people attended), OCN Volunteering in your Community (5 people attended), REHIS Food Hygiene (3 people attended).



Volunteers on the Volunteering in your Community course, undertaking teamwork activities.

In January 2011, information was circulated amongst volunteer involving organisations registered with Volunteer Action offering them the opportunity to take advantage of the training. 3 organisations responded, and as a result we were able to offer 2 x Befriender Training for 2 organisations (Food Train and Deaf Vision) who joined forces so that their volunteers could meet with others from another organisation (21 people attended funded by the project and 8 funded by one of the organisations as some of their volunteers didn't meet our criteria); and 1 REHIS Food Hygiene course for 11 volunteers from the Devil's Porridge in Eastriggs.



Volunteers from Annandale & Eskdale attending Befriender Training in Annan March 2011

In the Stewartry, work was ongoing with an established but totally volunteer-run organisation which wanted to undertake a range of customised training to meet their training needs and also for team building. These courses included: Confidentiality & Boundaries, Basic Introduction to Child Protection, and Introduction to Health & Safety.



Volunteers from the Blair Centre, Dalbeattie

General feedback from the volunteers who attended the courses has been very positive and included that they valued the courses and would highly recommend it to other volunteers. In addition they thought the courses were well organised, enjoyable, relevant, interesting and motivating, and the information was presented in a way that would be easy to pass on to young people.

In April 2011, Volunteer Action organised a 'Celebration' event at the Cairndale Hotel, Dumfries. This was chosen as a venue as it was easily accessible to volunteers from both Annandale & Eskdale and the Stewartry. Feedback from the event included: Good food, good company; Very enjoyable all round; Nice presentation; Very good day; Enjoyed meeting and chatting to new people; Was nice to meet other people. Very friendly did not know what to expect so really enjoyed it; Enjoyed event and friendliness of everyone; Enjoyed meeting a lot of new people and the event; A lovely opportunity to meet people involved in the extremely important work of volunteering; Very friendly gathering with a lovely lunch.



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8. How was the project delivered?

The training workshops were planned and delivered in both the Stewartry and Annandale & Eskdale areas by the Training Officer. A Training Assistant also delivered some of the workshops. Administrative support was given by 2 volunteers in the Dumfries office. Both the Training Officer and Training assistant also committed some volunteer hours.

The workshops were delivered in local venues that the volunteers were familiar with, all refreshments and travel costs were provided.

The project was overseen and monitored by the Manager and Board of Directors of Volunteer Action.

9. What marketing was undertaken?

The training workshops were advertised via Volunteer Action's website, through local networks and volunteer involving organisations. Volunteers registered with Volunteer Action were contacted by letter inviting them to attend the workshops, with reply slips enclosed.

10. Who benefitted from the project?

Volunteers and volunteer involving organisations in the local communities benefitted from the training. In turn, service users of the volunteer involving organisations, family, friends and the wider community will also benefit from the training the volunteers received.

Local venue and food suppliers also benefitted from the project by supplying goods and services.

The volunteers came from the following townships: Gatehouse of Fleet, Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbright, New Galloway and Dalbeattie in the Stewartry, and Gretna, Lockerbie, Eastriggs, Annan, Lochmaben and Langholm in Annandale and Eskdale.

11. How did the final budget turn out?

There was a final underspend of £2924.37. This was made up from the budget headings that are more difficult to determine ahead of time:

Volunteers travel – many of the volunteers travelled by FREE bus pass, and we delivered the training in local venues to reduce the costs and inconvenience to the volunteers.

Refreshments – we utilised local firms to provide the refreshments, who provided the food at costs below our original estimate

Staff travel – there were 14 courses delivered instead of 9, but delivery was local to office bases and this reduced the overall expenditure in the budget heading

Venue hire – we used local venues, many of which were provided free, with costs below our original estimate

12. What lessons have been learnt?

Lessons learned

Although volunteers indicate their interest in the training courses we offer when they register, we have learned that their circumstances have often changed by the time we are able to actually deliver the courses and they are no longer able to attend. In the future, we intend to offer our training courses to volunteer involving organisations to get a base group, and then offer the course to registered volunteers to enhance the group.

We need to negotiate with schools to allow them to recognise that some of the courses are not covered by them if their pupils opt out of Home Economics in year 2.

13. Will the project be mainstreamed or transferred?

During the project, we have identified additional training workshops that volunteers would be interested in. Further funding is currently being sought to enable the project to not only continue but to be rolled out to all areas of Dumfries & Galloway.

In addition, to enable us to continue to offer training not only for volunteers but volunteer managers we are currently investigating becoming a Individual Learning Account course provider.



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14. Detail the sustainability of the project and/or the exit strategy.

Funding bids have been submitted to carry on and extend the project to cover the whole of the region.

In addition, Volunteer Action has registered with Skills Development Scotland to enable us to offer the workshops through Individual Learning Accounts. The courses are now on the SDS website. This will reduce our reliance upon external funding applications.

15. Detail how the project has addressed the LEADER issue selected in the application.

Training to carry out their role is essential for all volunteers. The training through this project is additional to their induction and role related training. There is no expectation that this is a reward for volunteering. However, the training through the project will enhance the skills of the volunteers, and helps to address the issue - Promote a learning and skilful region.

The project worked with some volunteers who were rurally isolated and had little positive experience of education.

The project helped to:

- Improve volunteers' knowledge of food, diet, meal planning and its impact on health, and in turn helped to make changes in their diet
- Improve confidence & self belief, enabling volunteers to be pro-active about their future, employment and health and future for their family
- Provide an opportunity to participate in accredited formal learning to increase knowledge and develop new skills
- Strengthen the capacity and skills of the volunteering sector by training volunteer befrienders and providing volunteers with new knowledge, skills and confidence.