



Community Planning Aberdeen

Progress Report	Project End Report: 11.2 Maximising Volunteering Opportunities (Revised 2021)
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Governance Group	CPA Board – 19 April 2023

Purpose of the Report

This report presents the results of the LOIP Improvement Project Aim 11.2 which sought to increase opportunities for people to increase their contribution (volunteering) to communities by 10% by 2023. and seeks approval to end the project as the aim has been achieved.

Summary of Key Information

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 This project meets key national objectives at a local level such as:

- Contributing to achieving key (LOIP) local priorities and outcomes, and priorities within Locality Plans.
- A Connected Scotland- strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections.
- Volunteering for All, Our National Volunteering Framework: NHS Boards and Health & Social Care Partnerships should work consistently and collectively to ensure robust systems are in place to support safe, effective and person centred volunteering, engaging with Clear Pathway Guidance and Volunteering in NHS Scotland Programme as required. We should also highlight and encourage best practice in relation to the governance and associated management standards required for all volunteers and others to have a role to play within NHS settings, regardless of the source of recruitment.
- Supporting the Scottish Government’s (2018) newly reviewed National Performance Framework (NPF), and has a role in supporting the 11 National Outcomes, which include: ‘We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe’. We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society. ‘We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential’.

1.2 At initiation of the project the number of active volunteers in Aberdeen was 70,500 individuals delivering 4.4 million hours per year. Economically, volunteering contributes over £65m to the Aberdeen Economy every year.

2 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM

2.1 Against this background, the CPA Board approved the project charter initially in December 2020 and refreshed in November 2021 for the initiation of an improvement project which aimed to increase opportunities for people to increase their contribution (volunteering) to communities by 10% by 2023.

2.2 There is substantial economic and social value in the act of volunteering: people use less services by contributing to their communities in ways they choose, this is proven by statistics and research around increased life expectancy and quality of life values.

2.3 Through the COVID pandemic the volunteering community was critical in delivering vital support to people and communities, often our most vulnerable. We experience unprecedented levels of people volunteering and volunteering opportunities. This project contributes to sustaining this by developing further suitable opportunities for individuals.

2.4 This project demonstrates the potential to coordinate new volunteering initiatives that are emerging to increase volunteering numbers.

2.5 The project aimed to build on the existing good partnership work already taking place with regards to community involvement, community engagement and volunteering. This included partnership work in communities and across public services. Priority neighbourhoods were a priority and the project team worked closely with Locality leads to identify and engage with key groups in these areas.

3 WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE?

3.1 Our change ideas focused on developing, promoting and co-ordinating the availability of volunteering opportunities for people to contribute to improvement in their communities, as well as the wider benefits from this and introducing mechanisms to support and enable communities to feel confident and empowered in engaging in volunteering opportunities knowing that there is a network of support, guidance available to them and being able to capture/promote the benefits they are delivering for their area and share this with others. This has also included raising awareness within the tests of the volunteer hub for the promotion of new opportunities as they arise.

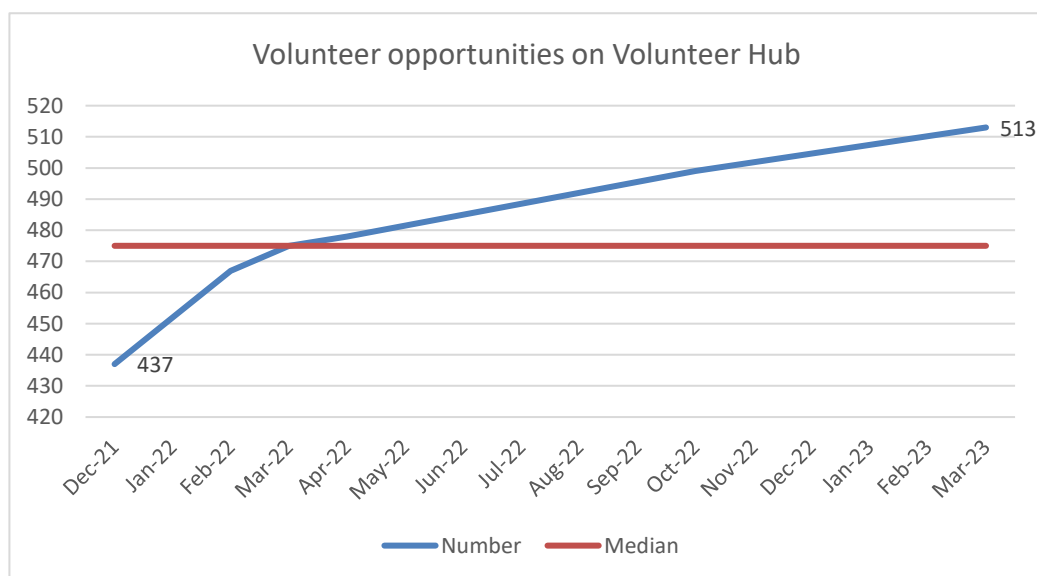
3.2 Several changes have been tested throughout the course of the charter project, namely:

- Identify and promote volunteering opportunities relating to public sector services eg emerging issues requiring multi-agency response
- Build community capacity to respond and support responses to emergencies eg fire, flood through volunteering opportunities

- Advertise for community connectors on volunteer hub who will be the “connection” between the project and the community,
- Advertise Volunteer Aberdeen hub at local community level. Seeking to raise the number of opportunities by more than 10% from a baseline in 2021 of 437
- Match volunteers to environmental improvement activities

4 HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?

4.1 The changes have resulted in improvement. We achieved our aim with an overall increase since December 2021 of 17.4% (437 to 513 – 76 new opportunities in total) in volunteer opportunities on the volunteer hub as a result of consistent promotion of the Hub across media and in contact with groups and volunteers augmenting ACVO’s efforts.



4.2 New opportunities developed included:

- community resilience opportunities in every community across the city
- opportunities to support the resettlement of Ukrainian refugees
- opportunities to support vital activities following the passing of the Queen
- opportunities to support and respond to the cost of living crisis
- opportunity to become a community connector
- to volunteer across green space
- to set up a volunteer led youth group with support from CLD.

which have resulted in:-

- A new Community Resilience Volunteer Group (CRVG) established and launched in Bridge of Don and Danestone and two new groups in the initial stages of starting CRVGs in Ruthrieston and Midsocket & Rosemount,
- Significant levels of new volunteering around emerging positions such as Ukrainian refugee support and responses to the cost of living crisis.
- An increase of 166% in the number people volunteering across green spaces to 4125, across the city in 21/22

Identify and promote volunteering opportunities relating to public sector services

- 4.3 The project agreed to start testing with ACC. We issued a questionnaire within ACC to ask services to identify volunteering opportunities, but also to raise awareness across services that empowering our communities and providing ways to get involved was a requirement of the Community Empowerment Act. Once we had the opportunities, we could then advertise for volunteers and test a system for supporting volunteers identified.
- 4.4 As a result, volunteer opportunities were identified and promoted on the volunteer hub and now a process is in place and tested with positive outcomes from some of the opportunities described below.
- 4.5 Opportunities to support Ukrainian welcome and resettlement work was one of the main tests which was done at rapid pace given the circumstances. Opportunities were varied and ranged from collecting donations of food and clothing to preparing properties for Ukrainian tenants and assisting with the pop-up 'Ukrainian Community Centre. Opportunities were advertised in a variety of ways including press, social media, on the volunteering hub and particularly by cascading word of mouth requests through community groups and organisations. More than 100 Volunteers from across the city have contributed more than 2000 hours of volunteer time, up from c200 volunteer hours in April 2022. From this test we learnt the importance of a complete package of:-
- Simple, direct communication of opportunities
 - Robust co-ordination of opportunities
 - Offering appropriate training, ongoing support and the right tools for the opportunity
 - Ensuring the volunteer receives positive feedback and recognition for their effort
- 4.6 From the learning of the above we were confident that we had a robust system for identifying opportunities, gaining and managing volunteers that could be used in other circumstances.
- 4.7 More recently volunteer opportunities have been identified and developed to meet the challenges of the 'cost of living crisis' through initiatives such as warm spaces and community-based food provision.
- 4.8 As with the changes described key factors in success has been engagement with communities to identify opportunities they feel are relevant; publicity and promotion of opportunities including direct contact with people in communities; initial co-ordination by services and ensuring the resources, training and ongoing support are available to enable volunteers to make their contribution. Utilising the single volunteering hub as a mechanism of publicising opportunities has been key.

Environmental improvement activities.

- 4.9 This project has clear synergies to other LOIP projects such as 15.1, increase the number of community run green spaces by a minimum of 8 that are organised and self-managed for both people and nature by 2023. To achieve that aim, it required volunteers to be identified and that is the area we focused on.
- 4.10 Once the opportunities had been identified we tested different promotion routes to ensure reach was as far and wide as possible and that we were raising awareness of the opportunities to run a green space, to help a food growing initiative flourish etc. 4125 people have volunteered across green spaces, across the city in 21/22, an increase of 166% since 2020/21. The increase in volunteers has been vital in helping to care for and invest in local green spaces by enabling a sustainable culture that leads to an increased number of community champions, volunteers and community led green spaces.
- 4.11 In addition to success in supporting and increasing volunteers and green network, through support to empower communities to establish, take responsibility and run their local green spaces leading to more local engagement and an increase in volunteering and community pride, we also now have community champions who as well as promoting green spaces, are also promoting wider sustainability issues in their communities, for example – arranging litter picks, food growing. Taking, the learning from this test we developed the next change.

Build community capacity to respond and support responses to emergencies.

- 4.12 Again, synergies with LOIP Improvement Project for “Community led resilience plans in place for areas most vulnerable to flooding by 2023, leading to resilience plans in place across all areas of Aberdeen by 2026”
- 4.13 Working with the Community Resilience project (13.3) we have sought ways to raise awareness, identify, and develop community champions to support the development of resilience plans across Aberdeen. There is an opportunity for all areas to develop a community resilience group. Promotional material was created and promoted in a variety of ways.
- 4.14 As a result of the raising awareness and building the capacity of volunteers in relation to this test, we have seen the following achieved as a result of increased opportunities for people to get involved in supporting their community;
- Official Community Resilience Volunteer Groups established in Culter, Bridge of Don, and Cults.
 - A new Community Resilience Volunteer Group established and launched Bridge of Don and Danestone December 2022.
 - In 2023 there are already two new groups note their interest to start a CRVG, ACC will support the set up and initial plan creation as well as giving support on guidance, training and exercising – The two areas are Ruthrieston and Midstocket & Rosemount.

Advertise for community connectors on volunteer hub

- 4.14 16 community connector volunteers were identified following advertisement on the volunteer hub. Staff from the integrated localities team are working with partners to recruit and support additional community connectors in communities and to continue to advertise and promote the volunteer hub at local level.

5 HOW WILL WE SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

- 5.1 The data shows that the increase in volunteering opportunities has been sustained with volunteering numbers increasing each month since December 2021.
- 5.2 The changes implemented have proved successful as evidenced above and will now be embedded with a clear system for identifying and promoting opportunities and scaled up as appropriate.
- 5.3 We will continue to maximise identification and promotion of opportunities and maintain a strong link between opportunities identified by partners and the volunteering hub.
- 5.4 The new Community Empowerment Strategy has 7 improvement aims focussed on increasing community empowerment, empowering communities to get involved in all LOIP projects is a key aspect of that.

6 HOW WILL WE MONITOR THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

- 6.1 Should it be agreed that the project is ended, the data recorded will continue to be monitored and reported from the volunteer hub and the continuation of initiatives linked to the change ideas taken forward to ensure that performance continues.
- 6.2 The data will also be recorded will also continue to be monitored and reported to the Resilient, Included and Supported Group, as well as added to the Outcomes Framework/Improvement Programme Dashboard to ensure that performance continues.

7 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD

- 7.1 With the current cost of living crisis, demand, and requirement for community based support has increased, as has the desire for communities to contribute through volunteering. To meet this demand, the increase of volunteering opportunities will continue to be encouraged and further development out in the community will strengthen the support that beneficiaries receive.
- 7.2 There is opportunity for all Partners and LOIP projects to consider the opportunities for involvement in relation to their services, multi-agency projects and to use the volunteering hub for promoting ways to get involved to ensure that a co-ordinated approach is taken and to ensure no duplication.

Recommendations for Action

It is recommended that the CPA Board:

- i) Agree that testing is concluded and that this Improvement Project is brought to an end on the basis that the aim has been achieved and the changes tested will continue;
- ii) Note the opportunities for scale and spread; and
- iii) Note that the data set for the overall aim will continue to be reported via the improvement programme dashboard to ensure progress is monitored

Opportunities and Risks

- Getting the timing right for encouraging community involvement.
- Slow uptake or lack of interest from communities.
- Securing community and volunteer attendance / participation in the process
- Aligning the aims and contributions of different project partners.
- Getting the right skills in place to support projects.
- Funding for specific projects.
- Not being able to monitor project and to record data and results

Consultation

Project Team
Resilient, Included and Supported OIG
CPA Management Group

Background Papers

The following papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Aberdeen City Council Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26
[Charter 11.2 Maximising Volunteering Opportunities \(Revised 2021\)](#)

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