

Group Development Work



The role of the CVS Development Worker & the Mid Devon Transport Group Access & Information Development Worker focuses on group development, strengthening local voluntary organisations to maximise the impact for the surrounding society. This can be accomplished through building the capacity of individuals, increasing their skills, knowledge, confidence and motivation to in turn, empower their individual groups.

This work can be summarised as:

1. Advice on setting up and running an organisation or group
2. Identifying funding sources and support in making applications
3. Help with staff issues, ICT, volunteers, governance, financial control, monitoring & evaluation
4. Help working through any problem or process facing an organisation
5. Organising affordable training and giving information on relevant training opportunities from other providers.

The following case studies are examples of the impact of group development work in Mid Devon.

Involve Group Development Case Study: **Community Transport**

Key Objective: To improve the skills, knowledge and experience of trustees in order to develop sustainable fundraising techniques.

A local organisation working to improve the health & general well being of anyone with mobility issues, elderly, disabled or with other needs, identified that they required a Funding Strategy to reduce their annual shortfall.

The Development Worker investigated the current fundraising profile, then designed and delivered a Funding workshop specific to the groups needs. This was with a small group of trustees introducing new approaches to fundraising, and then continued to meet the group on a regular basis mentoring the groups work.

Key Outcomes: The group produced a Fundraising Strategy based around the Income Spectrum, a system to vary the sources of income. The group improved some of their current fundraising projects and started plenty of new fundraising ventures.

This then led to a substantial increase (55% increase in last 3 years) in the amount of money sourced from charitable events, sponsorship and general charitable giving.

Involve Group Development Case Study: **Local Focus Group – Capital Project**

Key Objective: To enhance the capacity of the voluntary group, in accessing funding effectively and in developing a new inclusive learning project.

Another group had been searching for funding for 15 years for a building project to improve the access and use of a small community church. They had raised some funds locally but had not managed to secure enough finance, to make it happen. The Development worker used the Funding databases at Involve to identify some other funders that could match the main funder and supported the group in tailoring bids to meet the funders criteria.

Key Outcomes: Through much community support and enthusiasm and the guidance and support from the development worker a successful funding bid secured the finance for the project to progress. The funders wanted to up-skill the local community in project management so the development worker ran training in starting community projects and basic monitoring and evaluation.

Involve Group Development Case Study: **Specific Project work for a group**

Key Objective: To deliver key outcomes and objectives for a specific group through assisting with project delivery within a specified timeframe.

Occasionally development work will involve completing a piece of project work within a specified timescale in partnership with a group under contract. One such project involved improving access to services and overseeing a budget of £28,000. The worker coordinated the purchase of equipment and project managed the builders to complete all the work within three months.

Key Outcomes: The work involved the complete management of the building project from obtaining quotes to monitoring the work. The development & production of a variety of publicity materials, including external signage for the building ensured the public were aware of the services on offer.

Development of an income generation stream ensured part of the future sustainability of the project. The work involved completing the set-up of all appropriate systems and procedures for the project to run smoothly. A Launch event was also planned and delivered with accompanying publicity.

Devon People First (DPF) is an organisation that provides peer advocacy support in the Mid/North Devon and Exeter areas to people with learning disabilities. The project is run and controlled by people with learning disabilities and they employ their support staff.

In 2004 Central England People First was funded by Devon County Council to establish a People First organisation in Devon. After 3 years of operation the managing volunteers within Devon People First decided in 2007 that Devon People First would become independent of Central England.

However Devon's managing volunteers felt that they would not be able to achieve full independence with their current skills. This led them to approach Involve to ask if it would be possible for Involve to help.

The support they requested was for Involve to provide an organisational role such as employing staff, support in managing finances and support the group to be as independent as realistically possible.

A special governance tool was developed for Involve which gave the group close to full independence whilst safeguarding both organisations. The resulting structure enables the volunteers to provide one to one peer advocacy, group advocacy and the other projects in a safe environment.

The following case studies are examples of the impact of the work across Mid Devon, North Devon Torridge and Okehampton.

DPF Case Study:

One to one peer advocacy

Key Objective: To improve the skills, knowledge and confidence of people with learning disabilities.

A client was referred by a Devon locality Community Learning Disability Team. The reason for referral was due to the clients wish to move from residential to supported living. An Initial visit was set up and due to the clients current understanding of what supported living was, a plan of how we could explain all the possible options available was agreed and six, one

hour sessions were required to work through our current accessible information sheets on supported living.

Key Outcomes: Having completed these sessions the client was more able to choose the appropriate option and still wished to move to supported living. We made a referral to direct payments team, supported the client to choose appropriate housing and helped negotiate the support needs. The client is currently living independently and we have done three follow up sessions to make sure needs and wishes are being met.

DPF Case Study: **Group Advocacy**

Key Objective: To improve the skills, knowledge and confidence of groups of people with learning disabilities to speak up for themselves.

We support **5 groups** to speak up in Mid Devon alone and have now set up a learning disabilities parliament that links these groups to Devon Learning Disabilities Services via Partnership Board meetings and sub groups such as Health or Hate crime. This link is achieved through elected MPs in each market town as well as MPs that attend Health forums or work with the police and services on hate crime projects. These MPs elect representatives to attend and have seats on Partnership Board.

Key Outcomes: The MPs have been elected by people with disabilities in their local area and have permission to speak on their behalf. They have access to Town and other focus groups to share issues and gather views.

They have increased their personal confidence and have specialist support to enable them to engage effectively with a range of partnership meetings and to campaign on issues important to people with learning disabilities.

An increased understanding by partners and key statutory agencies of the issues faced by people with learning disabilities was achieved through improved communication and peer representation.



Community Development

Involve employs two part-time community development workers who work with communities across Mid Devon. The areas of benefit were chosen by strategic partners, which included the local Council, Police, Primary Care Trust and Devon Youth Service. Some of this work centered specifically on deterring young people from falling into anti-social behavior and to go beyond prevention and to begin to address some of triggers that promote anti-social behavior.

Community development is a long-term process and must proceed at local residents' pace, taking the necessary time to help communities to develop themselves. This long-term approach is essential to ensure changes are sustainable and long-lasting.

Community development is a value-based process, its key purpose is to challenge disadvantage and inequality, and to build communities based on the principles of social justice, equality and mutual respect. Community development has to tackle power issues to be effective in supporting communities to achieve positive social change. The notion of positive social change is rooted in community development's core values: social justice, equality and anti-discrimination, collective action, community empowerment and working and learning together.

The following two case studies are examples of the impact of community development work in Mid Devon.

Involve Community Development Case Study: Community BMX track

Key Objective: To explore and develop youth provision in a targeted community in response to high levels of Anti Social Behaviour among the younger population.

After local residents and agency workers highlighted that young people in the village wanted a bmx track, the Involve development worker took a lead in establishing a sub-group from the multi-agency working group, to identify the most suitable site and to support young people in planning and constructing a track. The bmx sub-group consists of representatives of Devon Youth Service, the Parish Council, Mid Devon District Council, a local church, Devon and Cornwall Police, and Involve.

On hearing of the plan, a group of young bmx enthusiasts volunteered themselves to get involved in making the track happen. They decided on a dirt track which would be quick and cheap to construct, and enable them to fully engage with the project. Individuals within this group of ten or so boys had been identified as under achieving at school so it was considered that given appropriate support they could gain a real sense of achievement and respect. There had been significant behaviour issues amongst the group, and some of the boys had been in trouble with the Police. The project was considered to be an ideal opportunity for building positive relationships in their communities where suspicion and mistrust had existed.

Regular meetings supported by development workers, youth workers and other support staff were convened to advance the boy's personal development and skills, and to progress their ideas. The school showed their support for the project by allowing several meetings with the boys during the school day.

Key Outcomes: Potential youth facility identified through the community, potential users were encouraged to engage in planning. A mobile youth project supported the boys to start planning their dirt track at their weekly session. Some of the young people visited another bmx track, and a residential weekend was held for the group, primarily to improve their social skills and team building. The young people have designed their track and plan to hold a sponsored bike ride in order to raise money towards the facility.

Involve Community Development Case Study: **Community Youth Club**

Key Objective: To explore and develop youth provision in a targeted community in response to high levels of Anti Social Behaviour among the younger population.

A meeting was held between local families, the District Council and local Police about recurring anti social behaviour from young people in the village. The meeting sparked an idea for a youth club run by volunteers, as there was no existing youth provision in the village. Involve then advertised for volunteers to gauge the community response, and explored options and costs for a venue.

Several volunteers came forward and helped to plan an open community meeting to see if a youth club could be set up. The adult's meeting was attended by 7 potential volunteers from the local community. The meeting for residents aged 13-19 years was attended by 32 young people who wanted a youth club in the village. (This showed plenty of interest and need for the club).

Involve went on to work with the adult volunteers to access funding for training volunteers, obtaining insurance, purchasing equipment, hiring a venue for committee meetings and youth club sessions, and starting off a tuck shop. During this time, a long-term financial sustainability plan was created. Involve also provided training on committee roles and responsibilities, co-ordinated the development of policies and practices with the volunteers, and worked with the committee to form a network of support from local agencies and organisations. Step by step support was provided for the planning and running of the initial youth club AGM, which was followed shortly afterwards by the opening of a club bank account, and purchase of insurance. Volunteers did their training in Child Protection (both 'lead officer' and 'volunteer awareness' training), first aid, and TAPS level 1 youth work. The club was opened, and a launch event was held. After several months of sessions, the age range was widened in response to high demand from younger residents.

Key Outcomes: Successful, independent, volunteer-led youth club running sessions since April 08. Over 40 youth club members, with weekly sessions and an increasing number of attendees. The club is financially self sufficient, and is operating under best practice using policies and practices which were established during the set up of the club.

Volunteering



The Volunteer Centre Tiverton and Cullompton, which is part of Involve, offers a brokerage service, in which local people wishing to volunteer can apply on line, telephone or arrange to meet up in order to be matched to volunteering opportunities placed and advertised with the Volunteer Centre from local or national voluntary and community sector organisations working in the area who have identified a need for volunteers. Effort is made to match people's experience, skills, qualifications and passion so that the right volunteering opportunities are chosen which ensures that the process of volunteering is a happier and more fulfilling experience for all concerned.

Hand in hand with this the Volunteer Centre is able to offer support and advice to these organisations on volunteering policies, recruitment, support networks and training around all aspects of volunteer management, which can be of use to organisations in varying stages of development.

The following case studies are examples of the impact of The Volunteer Centre in Mid Devon.

Volunteer Centre Group Case Study: Pilot Project Support

Key Objective: To develop and improve communications and network support for groups using volunteers and to help in recruiting volunteers.

A Devon wide organisation applied for funding and was successful in securing it for a pilot project to run in Mid Devon. The Voluntary Visiting Scheme was to run for a limited period and was to be evaluated externally assessing the value of the project to people in Mid Devon who had a visual impairment and who were identified as being isolated either socially and/or geographically.

At the start of the project the Project Coordinator arranged to come to the Volunteer Centre to explain the project and to develop a volunteering opportunity. This was the start of a positive working relationship throughout the pilot project period and beyond.

Initially it was envisaged that the role of the voluntary visitors would be around practical help such as sorting the post, accompanying visits into town, helping to choose gifts, outfits etc. The Volunteer Centre therefore worked with the Coordinator to draw up a volunteering opportunity role which was placed on the database, advertised on line at do-it.org and advertised in the local press and radio.

The Volunteer Centre was also able to offer support to the Project Coordinator, by offering regular Volunteer Coordinator's Support Group meetings in which ideas, concerns,

frustrations and successes are aired in a confidential, relaxed forum facilitated by the Volunteer Centre.

Key Outcomes: There was a very positive local response. The Project Coordinator in Mid Devon was able to begin training and induction processes before matching the volunteers to clients and making the project the significant success that it was later evaluated to be in the review and statistical analysis of the project. It has now become a core function of the work that the organisation does in Mid Devon and it is envisaged to expand it across Devon.

Volunteer Centre Individual Case Study: **Volunteer support into employment**

Key Objective: To match a volunteer to an appropriate role and support them in this role to develop their potential

The Volunteer Centre is in touch with a very wide spectrum of people with a vast variation of skills, experiences and qualifications, with almost as many reasons why they are looking to volunteer as there are people wishing to volunteer. In these more difficult economic times one reason that people are repeatedly giving is that they recognise the need for a work reference if they have had a sustained period out of the work place.

One such instance was a volunteer who was referred to the centre in the process of recovering from short term mental health. She had been out of the work place for approximately two years and was severely lacking in confidence about her practical and decision making ability.

Despite having a very good degree and having held a very responsible job in the past she had no idea what she really wanted to do or how to approach returning to work but at the same time recognised the fact that financially, as well mentally, she needed to be moving in that direction. Coincidentally, there was an office volunteering vacancy at Involve at that moment in time, so with care, support and persuasion the Volunteer Centre Co-ordinator encouraged the volunteer to consider this as a possible role.

Key Outcomes: And so began this volunteer's journey of renewing basic office administration skills, building self esteem and confidence, social interaction and finding job satisfaction once again. This was not a journey of one long continuum, but one which had many ups and downs along the way. The overall result was nonetheless a volunteer who contributed a huge amount in time, skills and energy to the organisation.

With a work reference from Involve she recently secured a full time administrative role working in the public sector after eighteen months of volunteering. It is well within her capabilities, but has provided her with a platform to be more financially secure and to assess what steps she would like to take next with regard to her career.