



**Aberdeen Council of  
Voluntary Organisations**

**Annual Report  
2008 - 2009**



## Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations Annual Report 2008–2009

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### Definition of the 'Third Sector'

'The 'Third Sector' is a relatively new term for organisations that provide social or environmental benefit and which do not distribute profits. The term covers voluntary and community organisations, volunteering bodies, charities, social enterprises as well as some co-operatives and mutuals. 'Third Sector' is sometimes used interchangeably with the term 'voluntary sector'.'

Scottish Government: March 2009

# CHAIRMANS REPORT

This is my last Chairman's Report as I will be standing down at the AGM, after being Chairperson for over 3 years.

Reflecting on my time as Chairman, I have 2 overriding thoughts:

- There is overwhelming consensus across society from Scottish Government, local councils, and communities that they want a strong and effective voluntary sector but more needs to be done to support voluntary organisations to fulfil their potential.
- The sector is very fortunate to have so many committed and motivated people associated with it - both staff and volunteers.

Everyone knows that the next few years will be very challenging as public spending cuts bite even further. This will result in huge changes in the sector, as new organisations are formed and some existing organisations find that financially they can't make budgets balance. All of this points to the importance of the role of ACVO.

In this report, you will note that in the last year:

- 50 organisations received funding and business planning advice, including larger organisations that have had statutory funding cuts.
- 55 new organisations asked for governance and development advice.

The other major roles for ACVO are in promoting good communications and establishing effective representational structures. Much good work has been carried out in the last couple of years in these areas, and this will continue.

Our Chief Executive, Rhonda Kelly, left in summer 2009 after 3 years in which she successfully established the framework to take on the above challenges. Ian Paterson took over the helm in July 2009, and he has enthusiastically and effectively worked on the challenges and opportunities, including returning to the city centre by moving into new offices at Greyfriars House.

Please continue to engage with our staff when you need our service. Finally, I would thank my fellow Directors who have faithfully worked with me on the Board during a year with many challenges.

Gordon Kyle  
*Chairman*  
*Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations*  
*February 2010*



## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

It has been another extremely busy year for ACVO with lots of change and the following highlights.

### **New Children & Young People's Forum**

ACVO supported the development of a new network, the Children and Young Peoples Voluntary Sector Providers Forum.

They held a very successful inaugural event in March 2009, which was attended by the newly appointed Chief Executive of Aberdeen City Council, Sue Bruce, and showcased the various Children's services provided by the third sector in the City.

The CYPVSPF has gone on to be a strong voice for the sector and is represented on a number of forums within the City.

### **Website Development Service**

Due to the high demand, the ACVO's Communications team extended the Communications Support service to offer a wide selection of affordable web design rates to the Third Sector. Every client has different requirements so a package system has now been set up. They still maintain a free webpage development service for organisations with a turnover of under £30,000 per annum, but now offer various design and maintenance packages to the sector (charges vary). They now have a portfolio of over 50 websites.

## Representation and Communication

Towards the end of 2008, it became apparent that a clear structure was required for the Third Sector to be seen as a more cohesive community in Aberdeen, working together to address common concerns. E.g. how to increase their engagement within community planning and develop better open and transparent working arrangements with partners. The structure enables organisations involved in the networks to engage in the development of citywide policies and strategies. It also operates as one voice to ensure the sector's needs are heard and addressed.

During 2009 progress continued through the development of a website, [www.thirdsectoraberdeen.info](http://www.thirdsectoraberdeen.info). The website aims to help the third sector to better understand the community planning process and also to be recognised and valued for the contribution the sector makes toward achieving the Outcomes detailed in the SOA.

## Conferences/Events Planning

ACVO's Communications team managed and organised several events for ACVO and partner organisations. These included, to name but a few: Media Skills Training for the Sector with allmediascotland in September 2009 and the 'Focus on the Single Outcome Agreement' Stakeholders Event in January 2009.



## FUNDING & BUSINESS PLANNING SUPPORT

The Funding and Business Planning service has supported approximately 50 individual clients over the past year. The range of organisations supported was somewhat broader than previously with a number of the larger organisations seeking this support as they experienced statutory funding cuts along with a number of organisations set up in response to the closure by Aberdeen City Council of local services. As previously, the service was provided to a number of new start or small grass-roots organisations in all fields – arts, sports, social welfare, heritage, environment etc. However the share of the service being required by middle-range established social welfare organisations requiring intensive and ongoing support to move towards diversified income sources continued to grow.

## BUSINESS KNOW HOW NORTH EAST

This background, the momentum created by ACVO's 2007 More than Profit Conference as well as ACVO's already strong relationships with the private sector provided the basis for ACVO to take on the co-ordination of a pilot Business Know How programme for the North East in partnership with SCVO, RBS, Scottish and Aberdeen & Grampian Chambers of Commerce and the Aberdeenshire CVS Network. The programme, to share knowledge and understanding across the private and third sectors, was developed, with funding from RBS over summer 2008 and announced at a "Working with Corporates" workshop at RBS Corporate HQ in Aberdeen in September. The first element to be progressed was the promotion of Business Mentoring, managed by AGCC, to third sector organisations and, by end May 2009 of over 30 referrals mainly of mentees but also of potential mentors.

In November 2008, Business Know How North East was formerly launched at The Citadel, Castlegate Aberdeen with a free event featuring 100

representatives of both sectors and from City and Shire engaging in café discussions on the opportunities for and value of cross-sectoral exchange. From October 2008 to May 2009 10 free skills-exchange workshops with 144 delegate places were provided with private sector representatives delivering interactive learning opportunities to third sector delegates from across City and Shire. Half of the workshops were provided by the Business Banking team of RBS with the other half being brokered with support from Scottish Business in the Community from a range of other local companies. Every workshop set 3 clear learning outcomes and every delegate developed an individual action plan to take forward their learning, these being followed up by the ACVO Funding & Business Planning Officer acting as BKH NE Co-ordinator. Many of the referrals to Business Mentoring arose from these action plans. The majority of ACVO's Funding and Business Planning clients took up places on the BKH workshops and referral to Business Mentoring and this input proved significant for many in progressing their capacity building for future sustainability.

A Business Know How North East website was developed by the ACVO Communications team and all event and workshop delegates, mentees and other interested parties were signed up to a BKH Network which by end May 2009 numbered nearly 300. In February, a briefing on mentoring in the third sector was provided to Business Mentors in association with AGCC and following this a number of mentors volunteered to form a "Dragons Lair" at the Showcase event being planned for May 2009.



## Case Study: *SHOPMOBILITY ABERDEEN*

One example of the support provided both by ACVO's core Funding and Business Planning Support and BKH NE is that of SHOPMOBILITY ABERDEEN.

In early August 2008, ACVO's Funding & Business Planning Support Service was contacted by the manager of Shopmobility Aberdeen with a request for help to draw up a business plan. The organisations accommodation in Aberdeen City Council premises would be lost within 3 years while the opportunity to operate from a different less central site from 2009 though welcome was not appropriate to meet the full range of clients' needs or organisational requirements. However, it quickly emerged that the organisation had two more pressing issues – a lack of volunteers and a lack of funds.

The organisations small team of service-providing volunteers – were also the organisations Trustees. One of the resulting challenges was in managing the volunteer rota. Incorporating new recruits into this core volunteer team had also been challenging. Consequently the paid staff member's hours were substantially absorbed in tasks intended to be carried out by volunteers.

The volunteers, being people with disabilities themselves, had good understanding of the interests of the organisations beneficiaries and of providing a responsive service. They had less experience of the interests of the organisations other stakeholders and of developing a sustainable service. Community fundraising had diminished as a result of a lack of volunteers. Grant-seeking and corporate fundraising was restricted by the lack of staff hours.

A review of the organisations governing documents by ACVO's Development Officer identified a range of deficiencies which might also have a negative impact on grant-givers' response to the charity. The Development Officer identified further changes which could facilitate the governance of the organisation.

Shopmobility Aberdeen had sufficient funds to cover core costs only until the end of 2008. A request for further Aberdeen City Council support had been submitted but no response received. Some appeals to charitable trusts were pending but Shopmobility Aberdeen had had limited success previously. Feedback suggested that independent funders took the view that the private sector, as major stakeholders in the success of the Shopmobility service, should be major contributors to that success. While Shopmobility Aberdeen had previously appealed to the private sector, this had tended to result in small cash or in-kind donations.

ACVO's Funding Officer worked with the Shopmobility Aberdeen manager on establishing SMART objectives to address both these two immediate issues and the longer-term business planning requirements, took agreed steps, some of which are given below:

- The Development Officer met with Shopmobility Aberdeen's manager, attended the organisations AGM and advised the Trustees of the governance issues. He also introduced the current needs of Shopmobility Aberdeen to Volunteer Centre Aberdeen who were able to promptly refer additional volunteers.
- The Funding Officer supported the drafting of an application to Awards for All for the unfunded staff hours to be used for the recruitment and support of volunteers and for the development of relationships with the private sector. This application was successful by the end of November.

- The Funding Officer advocated on behalf of the organisation with Aberdeen City Council reassuring them of the steps to put the organisation on a more sustainable footing. This supported the approval of significant funding.
- The Funding Officer drafted an appeal to charitable trusts and produced a list of targets for Shopmobility Aberdeen which resulted in a range of medium range grants including 2 from trusts connected with high profile figures.
- The Funding Officer contacted a range of business contacts made through her place on the Board of Scottish Business in the Community in the region and from other experience.
- The John Lewis Partnership manager responsible for Corporate Social Responsibility locally met ACVO and Shopmobility Aberdeen, confirmed their support, provided additional introductions, offered marketing staff time.
- John Lewis offered to review and redesign their branding and materials. They recommended redevelopment of the website. Shopmobility were referred to the ACVO Communications Officer to redesign the website according to the John Lewis recommendations.
- The Shopmobility Aberdeen manager took part in an ACVO workshop on “Working with Corporates” which increased confidence and skills in this area, introduced the organisation to a church-based group with capacity to provide volunteers for the improvement of the premises and drew the organisation into the Business Know How programme in which ACVO is a partner.
- Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce were then able to provide the Shopmobility Aberdeen manager with a Business Mentor to provide the experienced support which had been lacking.

## REPRESENTING THE CITY: ABERDEEN CIVIC FORUM

The Aberdeen Civic Forum is the voice of communities within the Community Planning Partnership in Aberdeen. It brings together representatives from each geographical area of Aberdeen - through Community Councils where they exist or other community groups where they do not, and from the various communities of interest such as women, youth, older people, ethnic minorities, disability and so on - to identify issues of common concern and to ensure that the Community Plan and Community Planning process are influenced by the views and priorities of the people of Aberdeen.

The Civic Forum is supported by a Development Officer who has been based at ACVO since May 2007. The Civic Forum meets quarterly and over the past year has held meetings focussed on the following topics:

**May 2008** - Presentations on the Youth Manifesto, "Read my Lips", and the "Future Economic Outlook for Aberdeen City and Shire".

**September 2008** - Presentations from the lead councillors and officers in Aberdeen City Council on the background to the City Council's financial difficulties and the implications for its ability to deliver its share of the Community Plan.

**November 2008** - Presentation by lead councillors and officers in Aberdeen City Council on the draft Aberdeen City Council budget for 2009/10 as part of the City Council's consultation on the draft budget with partners in Community Planning.

**February 2009** - Presentation by lead members of the Joint Futures Team of Aberdeen City Council and the Community Health Partnership on Care in the Community.

Following each quarterly meeting, a 'Next Steps' working group is set up to discuss the outcomes and concerns arising from the meeting as the basis of developing an action plan to communicate these views to the appropriate organisations as well as to the appropriate Alliance partners and Challenge Forums.

Representatives of the Civic Forum continue to attend Community Planning Partnership and Challenge Forum meetings, the latter being tasked to deliver the Single Outcome Agreement which now forms the core of the Community Plan. The Civic Forum has also taken part in a range of consultations, workshops and conferences over the past year offering in each case a city-wide residents' perspective on the issues being addressed.

The Civic Forum's quarterly newsletter, Briefing, updates the membership and other interested parties on its work and both provides feedback from representatives on Challenge Forums and information on other issues of relevance to Community Planning. The latest newsletter is always available to download from the Civic Forum website at [www.aberdeencivicforum.org.uk](http://www.aberdeencivicforum.org.uk)

Membership of the Civic Forum has remained fairly steady sitting in the low eighties out of a possible 129 in total. Efforts are constantly being made to increase this number and to help with this process a survey was undertaken early in 2009 amongst the membership to draw out the value that members find in their involvement in the forum. Key benefits were getting early information about plans for the city as well as the opportunity to be heard by those taking critical strategic decisions whilst also trying to influence and shape those decisions before they are implemented.

# DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

*Another year of challenge...*

The year 2008-2009 has been another year of challenges for voluntary and charitable organisations in the City of Aberdeen, writes ACVO Development Officer Sandy Mathers.

138 organisations used the Development Officer's services on a "greater than one-off enquiry" level of service. Of these, 55 were proposed new organisations approaching ACVO for initial development advice. These new groups included heritage, cultural or sporting organisations, social care, community development organisations and ethnically-based and faith groups.

Typical requests for assistance involved establishing groups, constitutional matters, the implications of charity law and accounting regulations, advice on incorporation as a limited company, training for management committees and general administrative and financial questions as well as questions on policy.

Some proposed new groups were signposted to existing groups with similar aims.

A new network of organisations with an interest in development issues in Africa was formed. The Africa Network of North East Scotland was brought together from organisations which had been working with the ACVO Development and Funding Officers.

A number of organisations with compliance issues with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) have been assisted to make changes. The Development Officer now proactively approaches (where possible), Aberdeen charities that find themselves on the published Defaulters list.

As with the previous year a number of organisations have ceased to operate owing to difficulties exacerbated by the generally tougher funding environment. The Development Officer has assisted some of these groups to make an orderly dissolution, avoiding personal liability to trustees.

As we referred to in last years report, a number of new organisations continue to actively pursue and investigate taking services currently provided by Aberdeen City Council into the Third Sector.

As well as 37 separate Management Committee/Directors training events, many organisations requested information on Charity Accounting Regulations. Several sessions were held with charity treasurers in the preparation of compliant accounts. Publicly available training courses were delivered on Gift Aid and use of the OSCR Receipts and Payments workpack for smaller charities.

As with previous years the Development Officer also delivered training in Aberdeenshire through the CVS Training Initiative on a number of topics.

The Development Officer and the Chief Executive took responsibility for the rolling out of PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations). A requirement for continued Scottish Government funding was that every council of voluntary Service in the land had to achieve Level 1 PQASSO compliance. This has been done by the deadline specified by Scottish Government.

The process involved taking an evidence-based look at the work of ACVO and its achievements. The process is intended to feed into future developments of assessments and evaluation of the work of ACVO. ACVO also acted as an intermediary for one organisation in accessing Disclosure information for its employees.

The Development Officer also participated in the Common Purpose Matrix programme by means of a Bursary. Though a major commitment, the programme was very worthwhile particularly through contact with colleagues in other sectors.

The Development Officer also participates regularly in the popular monthly Radio Programme on SHMU FM hosted by our Volunteer Centre Colleague Rod McDermid “Why Don’t You Just Volunteer”.

During the year 08/09 the OSCR Reference Group advising on the design and implementation of a training course for advisors of small charities completed its work. The Development Officer also participated in consultations by the OSCR Reference Group on new guidance for Independent Examiners.

## 6 CORE ACTIVITIES OF ACVO

**Understanding the Sector** – Ensuring CVS hold up to date intelligence information on the profile of the community and the sector in their area and that they are familiar with the sector’s main concerns including an assessment of need;

**Communicating with the Sector** – Providing relevant and up to date information and facilitating networking between organisations, enabling them to respond to emerging issues and consultative processes;

**Representing the Sector** – Working with other sectors, ensuring the views and interests of the sector are represented.

**Provide Support Services** – The range of services is likely to remain extensive and includes practical office support such as copying and room hire, to more substantial services such as funding, legal frameworks, management and employment advice, strategic and business planning;

**Promoting Good Practice** – Developing the skills and knowledge of those operating at all levels in the sector; seeking to improve standards in service delivery, management and policy development as well as implementation;

**Growing the Sector** – Supporting the emergence of new groups in response to local issues and needs, strengthening the capacity of existing organisations through training and support.

## THE THIRD SECTOR AND CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

This year has seen the third sector taking ownership of their role in the Integrated Children's Services Agenda. Having identified specific challenges the sector has addressed these by creating a Strategic Group called the Children and Young People's Voluntary Sector Provider's Forum which aims to see voluntary organisations working together to be seen as one voice, ensuring the sector are contributing collectively as a sector toward partnership working and Aberdeen getting it right for the local children, young people and families.

It is seen as a thriving group more information can be found at their website: [www.aberdeencn.info/Networks/CYPVSPF.asp](http://www.aberdeencn.info/Networks/CYPVSPF.asp)

The sector has many effective representatives who give their time and energy to attend regular meetings across the city. These representatives now feedback to the Children and Young People's Providers Forum for updates and discussion.

The website [www.aberdeengettingitright.org.uk](http://www.aberdeengettingitright.org.uk) is continually updated on a regular basis and is now seen as a valuable tool, hosting information on what is happening nationally and locally, strategically and operationally, to ensure Children and Young People's professionals in the city are kept informed ensuring their practice is well informed.

Many new organisations have been established, and others have worked tirelessly to secure long term sustainability, not an easy feat in these economically challenging times.



## THE THIRD SECTOR AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

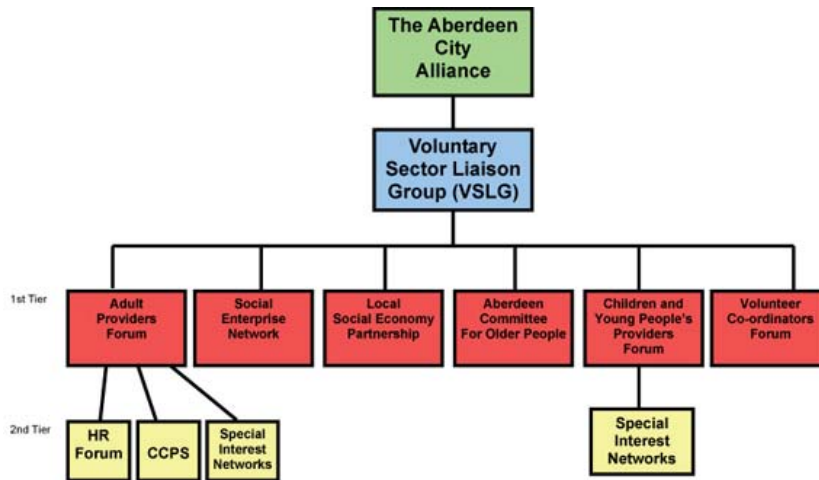
Recognition has been given to the value of the third sector within Community Planning and specifically toward their contribution to the outcomes detailed in the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) which is available on the Community Planning Aberdeen website.



In order to alleviate some of the challenges which have perhaps prevented high standard of engagement by the third sector, it was agreed that a third sector communication and representation structure be created with a view to connecting with community planning partners and working better together to achieve positive outcomes for Aberdeen's citizens.

A strategic representative group was set up to consider the way forward. It was suggested a third sector website may be beneficial, in addition to a clear structure encompassing all ACVO members and third sector groups who link with ACVO. This would provide a clear route to the third sector organisations engaging with emerging issues, participating in the consultative process and also being influential in long term strategic planning.

The Third Sector Fora structure was created as the route to community planning partners engaging with the sector.



It was recognised that clearly there is much work required for the sector to truly engage with community planning but presently due to a lack of capacity, ACVO are limited in what can be progressed and achieved for the sector.

We have begun creating a Third Sector website and hope that in the future a clear role be developed for representatives to ensure they are well equipped with clear guidance on how they can champion the sector as they attend meetings across the city. This is not an easy task and requires a specific ability to be able to focus purely on the Sector's requirements and not that of the organisation that an individual may belong.

It is hoped that this long term objective will be realised which will raise awareness of the significant contribution that the sector makes to the City of Aberdeen.

Please visit the Third Sector Aberdeen website at [www.thirdsectoraberdeen.info](http://www.thirdsectoraberdeen.info).

## COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT

Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations (ACVO) provides relevant and up-to-date information to the third sector in Aberdeen City and beyond; facilitates networking; and promotes opportunities for them to respond to emerging issues and consultations.

ACVO accesses and distributes current and relevant information to the sector through regular publications and communications.

ACVO's Communications Support Project began in August 2004 and has gone from strength to strength. The team work on a number of projects which aim to promote communication within the sector by providing, to name but a few;

- **A free weekly ACVO E-Bulletin** – to highlight latest local and national news, consultations, funding opportunities, jobs and events. The E-bulletin has a subscription list of over 2,000.

- **The ACVO Communications Website** - which includes up-to-date publications on 'Training Currently Available', venues for events as well as details on the latest events, jobs, funding and volunteering opportunities, strategies, action plans, consultations etc for Grampian. Visit [www.aberdeencn.info](http://www.aberdeencn.info).

- **The Community Planning in Aberdeen website** - ACVO have had the maintenance contract for over 5 years and also signpost to the website from E-bulletins and Updates. Visit [www.communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk](http://www.communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk).

- **A web development service** - the project offers various packages to voluntary organisations from a free basic website to organisations with a turnover of £30,000 or less, to their own full dedicated website with its own hosting, domain name etc (Prices vary). This is an income generator for ACVO.

•**The ACVO website** - a gateway to a wealth of information regarding the sector – updated regularly. The website also contains a media centre of all of the Media/News Releases and a blog from ACVO's Chief Executive (updated weekly). Visit [www.acvo.org.uk](http://www.acvo.org.uk).

•**An online Events Diary** – highlighting local and national events (updated weekly) so organisations planning an event can check the diary to decide on a date that will not clash with other events.

•**An online Funding Database** – highlighting the most up-to-date funding opportunities with searchable database (updated weekly).

•**A Latest Jobs section on the ACVO Communications website** - highlighting latest vacancies in the Grampian Region in the public and third sector (updated weekly).

•**Aberdeen's Health and Homelessness Directory** – refer to page 20.

•**Conferences/Events Management and Planning** - the Communications team organise conferences/events for ACVO and partner organisations. This is an income generator for ACVO.

•**The Third Sector Aberdeen Information website** - this website has been created for individuals and organisations to raise awareness of the benefits of connecting with others to enable us to achieve our common purpose – 'To Get it Right for Aberdeen's Citizens.' Visit [www.thirdsectoraberdeen.info](http://www.thirdsectoraberdeen.info).

•**The Aberdeen Getting It Right website and fortnightly e-update on Children and Young People's Services in the City** - the website and e-update keeps the third and public sector informed of local and national information relating to Children & Young People and the Integrated Children's Services agenda. Visit [www.aberdeengettingitright.org.uk](http://www.aberdeengettingitright.org.uk).

## ABERDEEN HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS DIRECTORY

The Aberdeen Health and Homelessness Service Directory, holds detailed information on 130 services in Aberdeen City which help the homeless and those in danger of becoming homeless, with a focus on health issues. The Directory is designed as a signposting tool for professionals working with homeless, or potentially homeless, clients.

The information is easily searchable by service type (e.g. Accommodation, Drugs, Alcohol, Mental Health, and Debt), project name, keyword(s) and A-Z. Service details can be updated at any time and a full information audit is carried out every 6 months, ensuring the information is as up to date as possible.

Since the website launched in October 2007 it has been extended to include an 'Information Centre' which details the Latest News relevant to the sector; a 'Document Centre' with access to hundreds of strategies, reports, statistical information, handbooks etc; and an 'Events section' with Training opportunities, Conferences and Seminars.



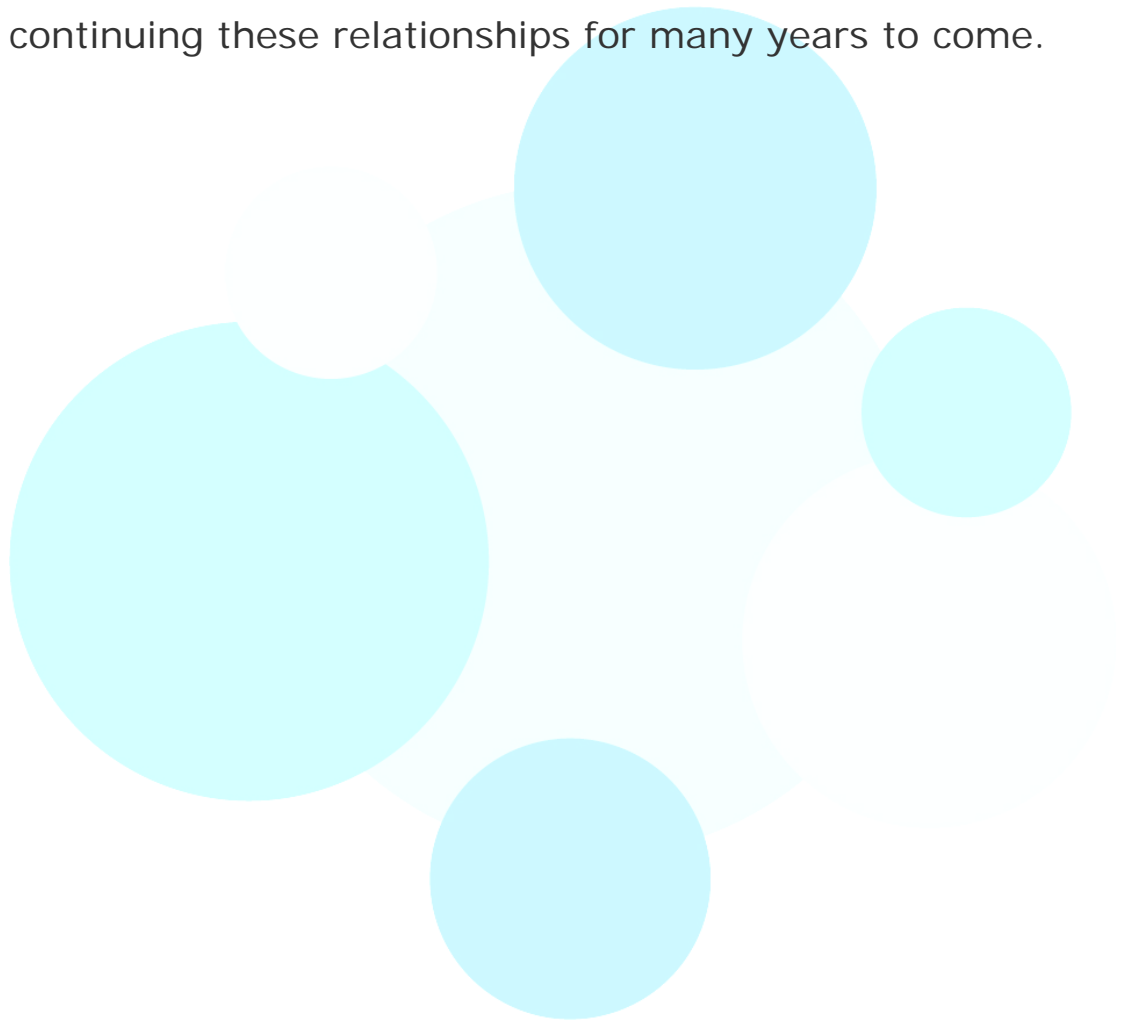
The Information Centre is complemented by weekly E-mail Updates sent to hundreds of professionals weekly. The updates summarise the most important news, documents and events for professionals working with homeless people and offers links to the Information Centre for more detailed information.

The site, funded by the Aberdeen Homelessness Strategy, has quickly gained a reputation for being a unique and indispensable signposting and reference tool for professionals. The number of visits to the site continues to grow as the site is promoted in the City. It has attracted local and national recognition for its distinctive structure and user friendly functions.

[www.healthandhomeless.org](http://www.healthandhomeless.org)

## Acknowledgements

ACVO would like to thank our staff, Executive Committee, members and partners that have supported and assisted us throughout the past year and we look forward to continuing these relationships for many years to come.



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