

Third Sector Aberdeen

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Aberdeen Forward

With only seven paid members of staff and a huge range of activities, environmental charity Aberdeen Forward really values its volunteers. “We have about 100 volunteers,” states Volunteer and Operations Manager, Gillian Marr. “They work across all of our projects and all of our activities. We couldn’t do half the stuff we do without them.”



Aberdeen Forward was originally set up to distribute landfill tax money in 1999, but has since developed into a registered charity with a very wide range of waste prevention, waste minimisation and sustainability projects.



Volunteer, Rachael Braithwaite

One of Aberdeen Forward’s biggest projects is the Creative Waste Exchange. “It’s one of our social enterprise activities,” Gillian explains. “We ask companies to give us unwanted furniture, stationery or arts and crafts resources – a waste product to them – and we turn it into a useful resource. It can go to community groups, youth groups, schools, churches, small businesses and individuals; we charge for sales but it’s very low cost.”

The charity also has a number of projects tackling household waste. “We promote home composting. We train volunteers to advise people how to set up a composting system in their house, what the units involve, what you can put in, that kind of thing. We also have information about peat free compost.”

“We also have the Aberdeenshire Community Composting Project, which is a fortnightly pick up of garden waste from certain households in Aberdeenshire. We take it to Easter Anguston Farm and compost it down there; it can either be used on the farm, in our Community Garden there or given back to householders to use in their gardens.”

Other campaigns include Stop the Drop which teaches people five simple steps for minimising the amount of junk mail they receive, the Love Food Hate Waste campaign which offers hints, tips and ideas for reducing food waste such as “thinking about what they are buying in shops, not getting sucked into buy one get one free deals, thinking about portion control, thinking about using leftovers the next day”, and the Real Nappy Campaign which has been running for six years now.

“We give out a free two week Real Nappy lend kit to parents,” Gillian elaborates, “so they can try out different styles without the cost of buying them first; it does help people to decide if they are going to go down the real nappy route and which nappies to go for.” Aberdeen Forward runs a nappy club on Friday mornings which gives people an opportunity to talk to volunteers, borrow supplies and have a cup of coffee.

The charity also runs a weekly hobby club from ten to twelve on Wednesdays. “People come along and they bring their craft along – sewing, knitting, cross-stitching, anything like that – and have a coffee and a bit of a natter. They have a good time and they can teach each other about their crafts; it’s a really nice, relaxed atmosphere.”

Aberdeen Forward also runs Back to Basics Sewing, Intermediate and Advanced Sewing and Upholstery evening courses, and has been running a gardening course at Easter Anguston Farm. They also do seasonal craft classes and were offering a recycled cards class during September’s Over 50s Festival.

Although Aberdeen Forward does receive some external funding, they have been innovative with their social enterprise activities and are keen to become more self-sufficient in the future. There are fees for their workshops and several of their services; they co-own their building along with Community Food Initiatives North East (Cfine) and get some income from renting out spare rooms; they also have workshop and meeting spaces which can be hired at low cost, hot desking facilities for people who need to be able to work in town between meetings, and offer virtual office facilities, for example taking in people’s mail.

Gillian reiterates the importance of their volunteers. “We’ve managed to expand lots of our projects because of [them]. We have a great range of volunteers – all ages, all abilities and all availabilities. It’s a nice mix around here; it creates a nice buzz when we have so



many people coming here for so many different reasons and wanting to get different things out of volunteering. They give us so much, it’s just fantastic.”

Last year, Aberdeen Forward were delighted to receive their Investing in Volunteers Award, and two staff members are now funded by Zero Waste Scotland to act as volunteering consultants. Despite these successes, Gillian states, “It’s always good to get good practice from other organisations; it’s nice to find out how they go about their volunteering programme. Information as a resource is always valuable to pass back and forth between organisations, and I’d be happy to share my experiences with anyone else as well.”

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Avenue

When Couple Counselling Grampian and Family Mediation Grampian merged, their team of staff and volunteers saw it as an ideal opportunity to assess their strengths and skills. Building on over eighty years of experience, they now have a new name, a new brand and are ready to introduce some new services – but without losing sight of their core activities.



This is Avenue.

“We believe everyone has the potential to change their life,” says Chief Executive, Elizabeth Wallace, but, “families are stuck. They don’t know where to go.” Avenue exists to help them find their way forward.

Avenue works with over 1,000 clients across Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray each year, and their range of activities is staggering.

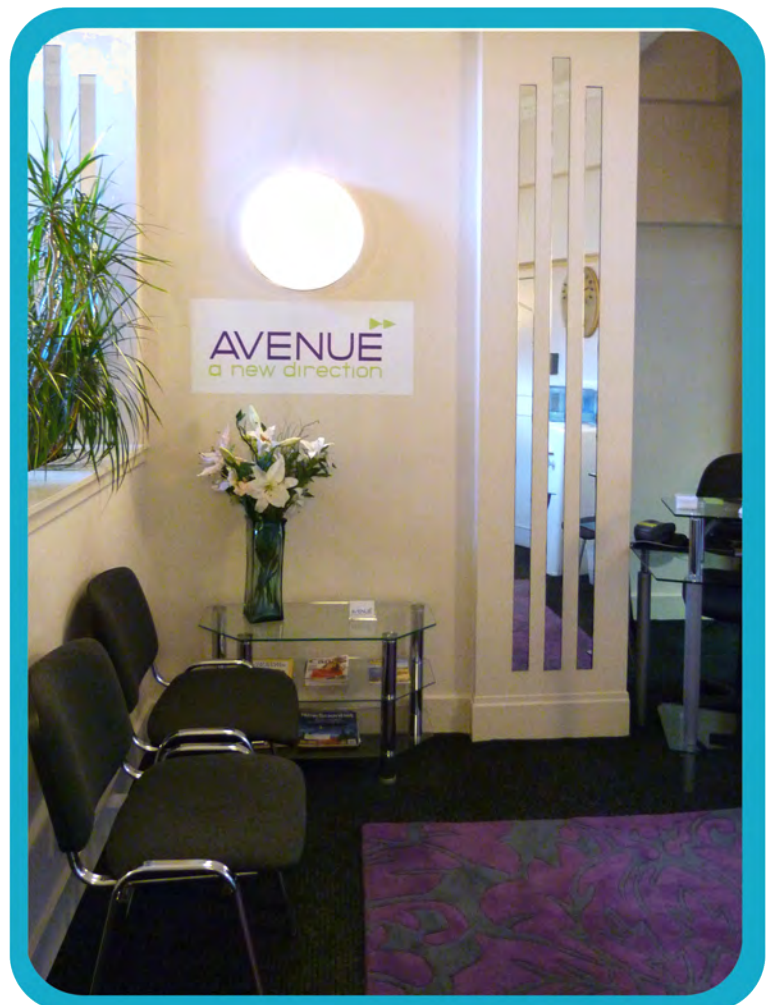
“We do general counselling, but our specialism is relationship counselling,” Elizabeth explains. “We also offer separation counselling where somebody’s struggling to come to terms with the separation, and we do psychosexual counselling which is funded by the NHS.

“Our counsellors are specifically trained *relationship* counsellors. They train to Diploma level through Relationships Scotland; they are experts.” Avenue also does a great deal of work supporting families.

“We have nine contact centres across the City, Shire and Moray,” Elizabeth continues, “which is where non-residential parents or other adults who have a relationship with a child can spend time with them. We offer both supervised and supported contact.

“Supported contact is where you have volunteers monitoring the building, making sure everybody’s safe, but not supervising on a one-to-one basis.

“Supervised contact is quite different; a trained worker is in the room at all times. It may be because the court has ordered it to be supervised for some reason; it could be that a child has never met a parent, grandparent or sibling; it could be because of allegations of



domestic abuse having gone on between the adults – it could be for all sorts of reasons.” Avenue also offers family mediation, working with separated parents to help them to make arrangements for the parenting of their children, and family matters, which is intergenerational mediation.

Elizabeth explains, “We might work with a mum and a sixteen year old teenager, for example, where there are lots of problems. Quite often it’s about preventing homelessness. We work with young people and adults and parents to help them find a way forward.”

“We also have children’s counsellors, so we do direct work with children aged about ten and up, and our family mediators are trained to do consulting children work, where the parents have separated; it could be that they’re arguing over contact arrangements and the child is telling each parent what he or she thinks they want to hear. It’s not counselling; it can just be really helpful for them to see someone who’s independent.”

Avenue currently receives funding from a number of sources including the Scottish Government, local councils, NHS and a range of trusts and grants, but Elizabeth admits that this seems to be “decreasing daily”.

“We have had to start charging for some of our services. Without doing it we couldn’t survive. “We also have meeting space upstairs which people can rent for training and so on.

“We’ve had to look to the future and find new ways of generating income with which to underpin our charitable work.”

With this in mind, Avenue is preparing to launch an exciting new venture aimed at helping small and medium sized businesses to better support their staff.

“It’s called Business Matters, and employers will pay a set amount annually and that will

give them X amount of hours of our time. It’s a very simple package.”

Elizabeth explains that, while there are already national organisations offering employee assistance packages, “Not every company wants to sign up to a big programme. All we’re saying is, if your staff are absent or not really working to their capacity, if they’ve got relationship difficulties at home or they’ve got a separation or divorce issue, send them to us because we can really help.”

Avenue will be launching their new identity and website (link below) and the Business Matters package at a Town House reception later this year, followed by events in both Aberdeenshire and Moray. The dates were unconfirmed at the time of going to press, but Avenue would be delighted to hear from local charities and businesses who may be interested in attending.

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CHAS at Home

Children's Hospice Association Scotland (CHAS) is the only charity in Scotland that provides hospice services for children and young people with life-shortening conditions. From October the charity's home care service, called CHAS at Home, will be expanding into Aberdeen to help local families in their own homes when they need it most.

hospices run by CHAS, Rachel House in Kinross and Robin House in Balloch. The service provides support to families in their own homes in between visits to the two hospices, or when a child is too ill to travel. The expansion into Aberdeen will mean CHAS can support more families in and around Aberdeen providing nursing care, emotional support and practical help.



Children's Hospice Association Scotland

Sharing the Caring

The decision to expand the CHAS at Home service in Aberdeen came after the charity worked in consultation with Paediatric Consultants in Aberdeen, and identified that it is reaching under 50% of children and young people in the area who are known to have life-shortening conditions. It's hoped a new CHAS at Home team in Aberdeen will encourage more families to use CHAS services to give them extra support.

The CHAS at Home service is currently based in Inverness as well as the two children's

One family who will benefit from the new CHAS at Home team is the Tye family from



Photograph by Paul Hampton



Aberdeen. Their three year old son Sean (pictured above) has Pompey disease, a condition that means he has very complex care needs. Dad Sam explains what the service will mean for them: “At the moment the CHAS at Home nurses have to travel a long way to visit us so it will be wonderful to have a team nearby. It will mean that families like ours living in Aberdeen will have an extra support network on the doorstep, There are no words to explain what that means to a family like ours.”

The new CHAS at Home team will be based in Rosemount Place alongside the CHAS Fundraising Team. The team will equate to two full time members of staff - two part-time nurses and one full-time support worker who will have experience of caring for children with complex needs as well as play skills for the children and their siblings.

Babs Henderson, CHAS at Home Director of Care said: “Families in the North East have highlighted to us that they would like more support in their own homes between their visits to the hospice. For most parents, caring for a child with a life-shortening condition

means 24 hour care with sleepless nights and no time to do the shopping, see friends or have time alone. Being able to help share the caring for a few hours at a time can make a real difference to them.”

“CHAS is working in close partnership with nursing professionals and the existing community services available in Grampian. Although there are currently services that support families in their own homes, the CHAS at Home team are specifically trained for helping families care for children and young adults with life-shortening conditions.”

Text and pictures courtesy of CHAS

Contact CHAS at Home

www.chas.org.uk

D.I.S.S.C.

Disability Inspiring Sports and Social Club (DISSC) is proud to call itself the place, “Where everyone should be able to join in the fun.”

The club currently has around fifty members with physical and/or learning disabilities who meet once a week to play sports, games and to socialise. For some, the club has been a springboard into coaching and formal competitions, while for others it’s simply a place to meet friends in an easy-going environment.

Club Secretary, Bryan McKenzie, spoke about the members’ various achievements. “Our members have gone with the Grampian team to Poland and to Greece. Seven members went to Leicester in 2009 to the Special Olympics and they all came back with gold, silver and bronze medals. This is their standard – although they’re not playing as DISSC

members, they *are* DISSC members at the Olympics, and we’re all very proud of them.

“There are others who will never be in that position because they’re not that way inclined, but most of them do take part in the club competitions.”

“In the last two years, we’ve split our bowling and table tennis competitions into two groups so that players who don’t play up to an elite standard have got a chance of winning something on their own. At the end of the year, it gives someone who may never have dreamed of winning a trophy the chance to pick something up at the Christmas dance.” The club was originally set up in the 1960s, although it has gone through several name changes in that time and only moved to the Mastrick Community Centre last year. Many of the members, like Bryan, have been coming along since they were children.”



29 year old Alex Rae first joined the club at the age of nine. "It gave me a chance to learn more about myself and be more independent," he said, "I think, if it wasn't for the club I wouldn't feel so much confidence in myself." Alex now competes at an international level in table tennis and bowls and is a trained table tennis coach; along with another member, he coaches once a week in a local school.



Bryan continued, "I've been in able-bodied sports for quite a while – I play bowls and darts – and since I've come back into disabled sport it's sort of a pleasure. When it comes to competitions, we always talk about them beforehand – it's not a case of coming off disappointed if they've lost; it's not a case of storming out. We are a happy-go-lucky club."

Member, Ian Urquhart, agrees, "I've been coming here for twenty years and I really enjoy it. I like doing the different sports and the competitions; it's a good laugh." Ian now participates in seven different sports and competes internationally; at the Olympic games alone he won three silver and two bronze medals for swimming.

DISSC currently receives no formal funding. Members pay £1 per session, a price they set for themselves, half of which goes to Mastrick Community Centre and the other half of which funds club activities such as trips and competitions; they also undertake fundraising activities and accept donations, but funding is a concern. "With council cutbacks, we don't know where we will be or if we will have any premises in a year's time," explains Bryan. "Our dream is to have our own accommodation and minibus, but we feel that is a long way off. In the mean time, we hope to get a laptop and a printer soon and would like to get a photocopier."

Having a printer would allow the club to reinstate their magazine. Bryan explains, "There was a quiz on the back and, when the sheets came back in, all the correct ones were put in a hat and a winner was drawn. "One week, one member with severe learning disabilities turned round and won the quiz and we gave him a trophy – now we *knew* that he didn't do the quiz; a staff member did the quiz – but we gave him his trophy and it was like he'd just won the lottery. He was going around the club showing everybody, and then four minutes later he'd be back to me. He came to me four times that day and I was the one that *gave* him that trophy."

"That day, that is what puts a lump in my throat, to see that. To see what they all achieve is just fantastic."

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DISSC meet at Mastrick Community Centre from 1pm-4pm every Sunday

Grampian Pre-Retirement Council

Grampian Pre-Retirement Council exists to help people to prepare for their future, but right now the eighteen year old organisation is also giving some thought to its own.

Chairperson, John Ganley, and Vice-Chair, Jack Nixon, are new in post and keen to move the organisation forward. “One of the things we’ve set out to do is to plan *our* future, the group’s future,” states John, “and one of the things that I think is a bit of an issue is our name.”

“What a mouthful!” Jack agrees. The name makes them think of local government when what they want to impart is a sense of the opportunities which retirement has to offer and the promise of an enjoyable course. “We don’t have all the trappings of local government; we don’t have all the bureaucracy; we’re non-profit making; we don’t have to watch our pennies in the same way the public sector would; we’re not dull.” The group currently runs an average of seven to eight two-day courses per year, each catering for twenty to thirty people, and the feedback is, as Jack describes it, “astonishingly good.”

“We’ve fiddled around with the course these eighteen years and made it really quite sophisticated. Over two days we introduce [attendees] to a wide range of speakers, but mainly it’s about themselves. We feed them as much information as we can, information

we think will be useful, and then they’ve got to go away and do with it what they can. “If the feedback is to be believed, we’re getting it right. It’s not a punishment; people really do enjoy it.”

The course covers pensions, mental and physical health, general finance, legal issues, personal security and personal development, but John believes that finance is the most pressing concern for many people approaching retirement. “I think a lot of us almost dismiss the financial bit until you get right to the edge and you think, hell, I haven’t got any wages coming in – now what? And I think what we have achieved is to give everybody the broadest possible spectrum of financial matters.”

“If you ask the [attendees], ‘would you have appreciated this course twenty years ago?’ the answer is yes,” states Jack. “We all think ‘what did I waste?’ The opportunities were there, despite recession, we could have invested. So we now run mid-life courses – not about mid-life crises – that are almost exclusively oriented towards finance.”

“But retirement is not the scary exercise people imagine. Although you’ll have financial constraints, you’ll have paid your mortgage off, you won’t have the same expenditure, and you’ve probably saved some money as well. There’s no doubt even just a few bob put aside makes a big difference.”

The organisation has historically worked almost exclusively with employees of larger companies at the request of their HR departments, but they feel that the time is right to broaden their reach.

John explains, “We’re struggling, in the face of a recession, to get employers to recognise our value. It’s like training; it goes on the back burner, which I think is a desperately sad mentality.”

Jack agrees: “It’s totally predictable that a group of twenty people will have a work experience of over 1000 years. That’s worth saying thank you for.”

With this in mind, the organisation is looking at ways of making their courses more accessible to individuals and to smaller organisations. Jack explains, “We’ve not been good at selling – we never even thought about it until we were forced to – but we cannot underestimate the need to let people know what we’re about. Our product is a proven success; it just hasn’t had as big a market as we would like.”

“Our whole exercise is looking to the future. I can’t imagine many of my father’s generation being that enthusiastic or able – physically able – to do what we’re doing at our age. That’s the message we want to get across: this is something to be treasured; something you can build on; you can do new things.”



Jack and John

“When you get into retirement,” John adds, “you’ve got the whole world open to you. If you want to start taking modest risks, you can do just that. You can take risks with the things you do, the things you undertake, things that you probably wouldn’t have dreamt of doing earlier in life. I find it quite remarkable.”

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**Third Sector Aberdeen is written and designed
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