

THIRD SECTOR ABERDEEN



ISSUE 4 (Summer 2011)

'developing, supporting and representing the third sector'



Photo: BTCV



Photo: Silver City Surfers

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ABERDEEN
THIRD SECTOR
INTERFACE



www.acvo.org.uk

www.volunteeraberdeen.org.uk



Services on Offer from ACVO:

- ◆ Development Support
- ◆ Funding & Business Planning Support
- ◆ Route to Representation
- ◆ Community Planning Engagement
- ◆ Network Support & Development
- ◆ Communications Support
- ◆ Volunteering Opportunities
- ◆ Events Management
- ◆ Website Design & Maintenance

ACVO ensures the Third Sector has a voice.

ACVO ensures that the third sector in Aberdeen City:

- ◆ Has mechanisms for working together with Community Planning partners
- ◆ Has a voice in local and national issues
- ◆ Is represented on forums and/or working groups in which the third sector has an interest
- ◆ Can forge links with other agencies to shape the future of Aberdeen

Core Activities of ACVO

Understanding the Sector

Ensuring ACVO hold up-to-date 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;

Developing 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;

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;

Supporting the Sector

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 advice on funding, legal frameworks, management and employment, strategic and business planning;

Promoting Good Practice in the Sector

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;

Representing the Sector

Working with other sectors, ensuring the views and interests of the sector are represented.

Single Interface for Aberdeen

In April 2010, ACVO became the single interface for Aberdeen. The interface combines the roles of the Council of Voluntary Service, the Volunteer Centre and Co-ordinator of the Local Social Economy Partnership.

Functions

- ◆ Support to third sector organisations operating in the area, both local and those national organisations that deliver services at the local level
- ◆ Support to and promotion of volunteering
- ◆ Support and development of Social Enterprise
- ◆ Connection between the Community Planning Partnership and the Third Sector



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The articles and photographs in this magazine were prepared by RGU Placement Postgraduate Student, (Msc Journalism) Ann Gillespie, MA Hons (pictured below). Magazine design and editing by ACVO Communications.



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Bethany Christian Trust

Committed to Tackling Homelessness



Bethany Christian Trust was set up in Edinburgh in 1983 by Rev Alan Berry MBE, Church Minister of South Leith Baptist Church. Moved by the struggles of the vulnerable and homeless people who came to the church in need of food, shelter and money, he, along with his wife, Anne and two friends, set about establishing the Trust.

Thanks to local gifts and support, Bethany was able to convert a property across from The Baptist Church, in Leith, into the first 9 bedroom hostel. Since then, the Trust has established itself in various locations around Scotland and currently provides services in Aberdeen, Dundee, Methil, Dunfermline, Stirling, Edinburgh, West Lothian and Dumfries.

Third Sector Aberdeen met with North of Scotland Manager, Andy Murray (pictured above), who took up the post in September last year, at the Trust's offices at 14-20 John Street, Aberdeen.

Andy explains, "As an organisation, we see homelessness as a hole an individual falls into. In the past, the Church has often looked on with a great deal of prayer and sympathy but what the homeless really need is practical steps to get out of it. What Bethany has developed over the years is different levels of support and care to help people get out of homelessness."

Across Scotland, Bethany offers a variety of services including street work, emergency accommodation, drop-in's, specialist residential units, community education and befriending. Andy talked us through the services provided in Aberdeen and how these have been expanding.

He states, "In the last few months, following discussions with Grampian Police, we have managed to start street work in Aberdeen. Our Drop-In

Co-ordinator goes out once a week to approach street beggars and works to signpost them to the appropriate services that will help them get off the streets."

Since 2008, Bethany has run a Winter Care Shelter for rough sleepers in Aberdeen, providing shelter, hot meals and practical support. Last year, the Trust operated the service on behalf of Aberdeen City Council with the aid of volunteers from local churches. Andy explains, "The scheme is about empowering and equipping local people to respond to homelessness and has proven fairly successful over the last three winters.

"Last winter was the longest project so far, lasting 16 weeks, and was available every night from 13th December 2010 until the 3rd April 2011. We had 25 catering teams from different churches which helped approximately 150 rough sleepers. This was a great example of partnership working, which provided professional support to help the homeless move on to more permanent accommodation, as well as providing meals and supporting volunteers."

In Aberdeen, the Trust also offers drop-ins for anyone struggling with housing problems, debt or addictions. The Haven takes place at Gerrard Street Baptist Church on Monday evenings while the Quay Toastie Club is held on Friday evenings at the Citadel. Andy explains, "Both these project are meant to be a place where homeless and vulnerable people can make positive friendships in a safe and secure environment. We have a holistic and multi-agency response to homelessness so quite often we invite other professional agencies to come into the drop-in's. This is so that individuals can link up with the agencies they need to give them the tools to make positive changes in their life."

Andy continues, "We try and make the drop-in as enjoyable and welcoming as possible. It is a place where people involved in negative relationships with drugs, alcohol and other associated problems can come to experience positive social relationships. We also provide healthy food, newspapers, board games or and live music. The Drop In Co-ordinator, Dave Pratt is always onsite to chat and help individuals by helping them apply for accommodation through the local authority or putting them in contact with an agency that can help."

The Trust has a number of other services on offer throughout Aberdeen. In partnership with Deeside

Christian Fellowship Church, it runs The Lighthouse, a place where men, women and young mothers in Tillydrone can socialise and get help. Also situated in Tillydrone is the Trust's Thrift Shop, First Port of Call, which provides affordable clothes and bric-a-brac. Andy continues, "We also run a class for Polish people to learn English. We realised through our night shelter last year that many people could not access services or get work due to language barriers. It has been very successful."

Bethany Christian Trust also has an ongoing community resettlement project, Passing the Baton, which helps formerly homeless or vulnerable people to resettle into communities. Trained volunteers are trained to become part of a 'Hit Squad' to support individuals to paint and decorate their home. The trained volunteers participate in social events and build positive relationships with the 'members'. The project currently operates in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Fife, Inverness, Mid and West Lothian. Andy explains, "We don't think homelessness is just about accommodation – it is much more complex than that. We are conscious of the fact that once people are back in their own tenancies they then need support to get back into employment. We are very focused on working with people to help completely transform their lives."

Across Scotland, Bethany Christian Trust has around 200 paid staff and 4,000 volunteers. In Aberdeen Bethany currently has three full time staff and up to 50 regular volunteers. During the Winter Care Shelter project, an additional five staff are involved along with 250 volunteers from various churches throughout Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. Andy states, "The drop-in volunteers' role is to set up and help provide food and drinks. Most importantly they build relationships with individuals and signpost them to the drop-in Co-ordinator. Winter Care Shelter volunteers do much the same. They ensure homeless people feel welcomed, provide a warm nutritious meal and sign post them to the Care Shelter Staff."

Andy states, "Recruiting and maintaining volunteers is a constant challenge. We have an ongoing training programme to ensure our volunteers are well informed with all the issues affecting homelessness. We have various organisations coming in for talks on violence and addiction issues to ensure our volunteers are up to speed. We are currently in the process of applying for our Investors in Volunteers Award to

prove we are recruiting, training and supporting volunteers in a very professional way."

The Trust is currently involved in negotiations to open a new drop-in at Kings Community Church on King Street. The aim is to create a coffee bar atmosphere offering food and shower facilities as well as an area for adult learning. Andy explains, "The drop-in centre will offer training for homeless people to return to the workplace. We are hoping to create a computer drop-in and camera club, with an addiction group after the drop-in finishes. The project aims to try get to the root cause of why individuals are homeless and help them become more independent."

Bethany Christian Trust has recently launched Stop Homelessness 2011, a campaign which encourages everyone in Scotland to donate £3 to homelessness services by texting HOME to 70300. The Trust also worked closely with Grampian Police, Integrate, Compassion Ministries and Prison Fellowship Scotland to organise the Closing the Gaps in Rehabilitation Conference at Pittodrie in March this year.

Bethany is also keen to establish partnerships with local churches. Andy explains, "Our target is to become more visible among local churches so they know we are here for advice and information about homelessness. We would like to empower and equip the local church to reach out to homeless and vulnerable people with love and compassion. We are open to speaking with other third sector organisations involved with work similar to us about working in partnership. For example we could be involved in sharing training sessions."

Andy states, "Having worked in the public sector for so many years I came into the voluntary sector over 4 years ago because I really believe in the Third Sector and how effective charities are in responding flexibly to people in need. Personalised services delivered with compassion and commitment can have a huge impact on people's lives."



Bites

A great resource in the heart of Aberdeenshire



Buchan IT & E-Learning Service (BITES) is an Aberdeenshire based Social Enterprise which provides IT training to individuals and businesses. According to Race Online 2012 statistics, there are currently nine million adult users in the UK who have never connected to the internet. Four million of these are among the most disadvantaged: 39% are over 65, 38% are unemployed and 19% are families with children.

Third Sector Aberdeen spoke with General Manager, Denise Belshaw (pictured above) to learn more about the service BITES offers and its plans for the future.

BITES has grown from a small community group set up by a few volunteers in 1996 to introduce IT within the rural community to an established charity which now aims to meet the needs of people affected by the digital divide. In 2005 the group of volunteers decided to formalise and BITES was awarded charitable status and became a Company Limited by Guarantee. BITES began delivering its service within a small office belonging to Aberdeenshire council in

the rural village of Maud. In the beginning there were just four computers and a volunteer supporting people living within the community who went along to learn about computers and the internet for around about £2.00 per hour.

Following grant funding in 2007 from The Big Lottery, Supporting 21st Century Life campaign, the then team of three staff members and eight volunteers relocated into a purpose built training suite, within a community owned and community led development in the village of Maud.

Denise told us more about BITES,

“Our core activity is providing IT training to anyone who wants to learn about computing, we address the needs of the community by teaching our students what they want to learn at a pace and style to suit their individual needs, in a relaxed and stress free environment. We currently have three main outcomes, to reduce socialisation, promote community and develop skills, confidence and self esteem and we meet these outcomes through computing and IT.

Everyone that comes through the door at BITES is welcomed by our receptionist and immediately put in a relaxed state with a chat and cup of tea or coffee. It really is an achievement when people want to come back time and time again and keep experiencing our comfortable and relaxed environment.”

Denise continued to explain, “Since Big Lottery funding nearly five years ago, we have met the requirements of around 1,500 people, the majority of whom return time and time again for not only the learning opportunities they have but also the relaxed environment where socialising is an important part of our centre, people who come to BITES make friends with us and their fellow students. In 2010 we were pleased to reach the milestones set within our grant and had over 20 disabled students, 170 retired

members of our community, 13 young parents, 38 students, 21 voluntary sector members and 39 small business customers come through our centre.”

BITES, is a member of ACVO and a regular contributor to the weekly ACVO E-bulletin, there is a management team of 8 team members and directors and 15 volunteers. Denise states, “Our volunteers sit in on the classes to support the tutors and offer assistance to our clients. We also have a group of volunteers that help with fundraising and administration.”

This will be the last year of the Big Lottery Funding for BITES and the team now needs to look at ways we can change and adapt to secure our future. Denise continued, “We have financial reserve but not enough to make us sustainable. Sustainability and funding is probably the biggest challenge that the third sector is facing at the moment, and for the team at BITES we recognise the need to change and diversify into other areas. During the past five years we have continually changed our curriculum and services to meet different needs but to diversify completely is something that our strategy team has to look at. We are continuing to grow the business side of our social enterprise and also considering expanding into IT maintenance, repairs and website design. A lot of third sector organisations do not have an IT

consultant on hand and if we can provide that kind of service at a competitive cost then it is something that we would engage in more.”

BITES is also looking to grow its training portfolio to target other needs. Denise tells us, “One of the biggest groups of people we support into IT is those who would be classed as in the middle years of life. However, we hope to look at how we can address the needs of younger members of our community for educational purposes and the very elderly (75+) who may live alone and be isolated with no connections to technology or the benefits it can bring, for social inclusion, commerce and information via the internet. In addition, we recognise that there is a growing emphasis on skilling people for employment and we will be looking into how best to help people who may be considering increasing their skills whilst already in employment, or those who are unemployed and need skills to aid their employability. For example, at the moment we have around 30 people working toward achieving a qualification ECDL (European Computer Driving License) for employment development which is great but there is always room for more at BITES”

Like any other business there is a cost for the product that BITES sells, i.e. IT training, but as Denise explained, “One of our ethos is ‘Everyone



Continued over/

Bites (continued)



pays something at BITES but nobody is turned away. It has been known in the past for people who cannot pay for courses to volunteer. We have to be self-sustaining over time so we no longer encourage that, however we do try and find funding for people if they cannot fund themselves and would normally direct them to ILA in the first instance”.

BITES became a Learn Direct Scotland Centre (now Skills development Scotland) in 2008 and became an ILA accredited centre in 2009. The ILA currently provides people with an income of less than £22,000 with funding towards the cost of training. Denise explains, “ILA funding usually covers 3 of our courses. People can apply for ILA funding annually so we encourage our customers to come back yearly for further training.”

However, ILA is for people over 16 years of age, and ineligible to the young people that BITES has in the past worked with, when during 2010 the team at BITES undertook a project to allow primary school pupils from a rural school to have the opportunity to learn about computers as part of an afterschool club. Denise explained to us, “in the area of this school many of the young families do not have computer in their homes, our trainer along with a volunteer went along and spend a few hours each week over an eight week period working with a number of pupils developing their IT

skills on the packages they use in the classroom such as PowerPoint and Excel. They also introduced them to the Internet for learning opportunities. We were delighted with the uptake from the pupils, who all received certificates at the end, and the feedback from teachers was very positive as they reported a noticeable difference in the classroom”

More recently, BITES has launched a pilot scheme with funding from Awards for All, Aberdeenshire Council, Total and Shell UK in which they have been able to purchase equipment to be used as a mobile classroom. Denise explains, “This is a pilot project which is aimed at interacting with the residents of sheltered housing complexes in Aberdeenshire by providing them with computer training. We invested in six new laptops, an overhead projector, screen and a printer which we are currently using to deliver training in two complexes. During the eight weekly sessions the residents will be introduced to computing starting with basic keyboard skills, eventually moving onto the internet, emails and social networking opportunities such as Skype or msn. Once this pilot is complete we hope to be able to use the mobile classroom at other sheltered housing locations or community buildings such as halls or libraries to offer training within the areas people live, although there is still some research required about how best to fund this type of activity.”

For people who have never interacted with a computer before Denise tells us that BITES is now working in partnership with the BBC First Click Campaign, with its focus on encouraging people to use the internet to understand and enjoy its benefits. Denise announces, “We are offering groups of beginners free eight hourly lessons. It is fun and relaxed and a lot of people come back and take part in our other courses.”

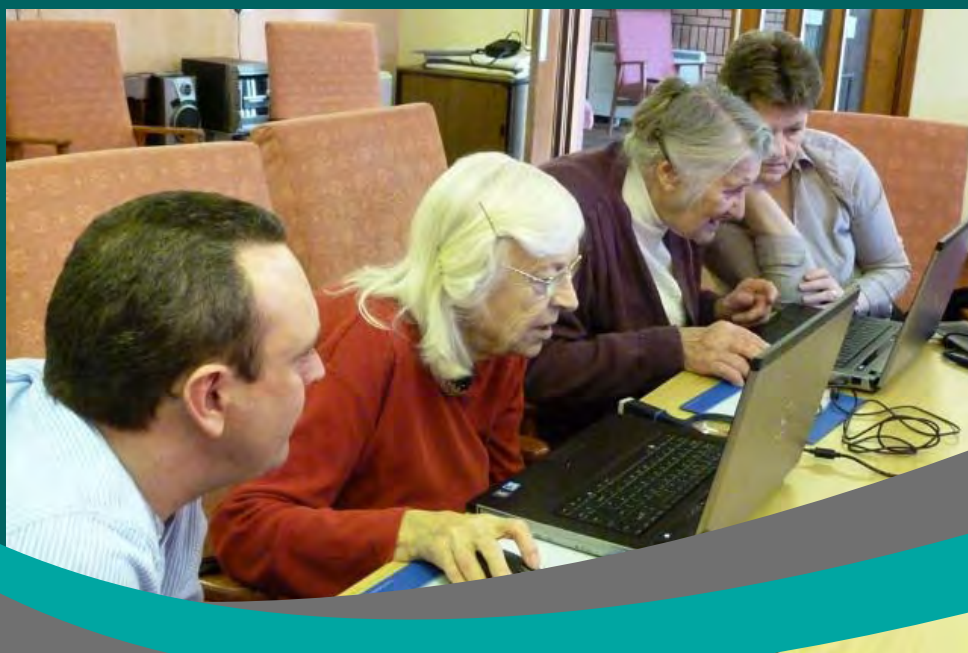
Denise tells us that she is committed to both

national and local digital strategies and as such supports events and promotions such as the Race Online 2012 campaign, with its ideology to get as many people online before 2012. Its ambition is to make the UK the first nation in the world where everyone can use the web. Further to that BITES has two free open days per year with the next one being on May 20th in conjunction with the Digital Unite Team BITES will host its annual Silver Surfers Day. Denise explains “we invite past, present and future customers, to come along and enjoy some learning, chat and refreshments with the staff and volunteers of BITES. Actually although it is Silver Surfers day anyone is invited to visit. The day comprises not only the food and chat, but hourly training sessions in the computer room, where people can learn basic IT, perhaps a bit of digital photography or some social networking Skype or MSN, we have yet to formalise the day but it usually is well attended. Aside from the computer learning opportunity during the day we have also partnered with the Community Development Team in Mintlaw and with the support of young people from the local Academy introduce our visitors to the joys of a Wii Machine, where we see our silver surfers playing virtual golf, or bowling, even boxing. It is good to see young people interacting with others and crossing that boundary of age.”

BITES is situated in the centre of Maud and in the heart of Buchan and as with all rural areas one

problem facing some of the customers that want to come to BITES is the transport issue. Denise explains, “There is always an issue around transport and getting people to us. We have Dial a Community Bus team within the complex and also the A2B taxi service locally but transport is definitely one of the difficulties faced by some of our customers, having said that, it is the exact reason that BITES exists to meet the needs of people who cannot access IT easily elsewhere and therefore, we do our best to address all our customers difficulties including this one.”

As an organisation BITES is unique in Aberdeen City, Shire and the North East of Scotland. Denise explains, “We often get asked if there is an equivalent BITES elsewhere in the area and the answer if no, although people can access the colleges and other learning houses we are unique in our ethos and delivery. However, we are always looking towards growth and I do feel the connection between Aberdeen city and the Shire is not as firm as it could be; there are a lot of exciting new partnerships that could be made, which is one of the reasons for being involved in the *Third Sector Aberdeen* magazine, I hope that this article will highlight the service we provide and that we might encourage other organisations with customers or staff who require the type of service we offer to get in touch and have their own BITES experience!



BTCV: Supporting Communities and Environmental Volunteering

Environmental charity, British Trust Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) aims to create a better environment where people are valued, included and involved through practical conservation work. Originally set up in England in 1959 as Conservation Corps, BTCV is now operated UK wide.

Third Sector Aberdeen met with Community Projects Officer, Yvonne Stephan of the Aberdeen branch.

BTCV, based at Foucausie, Grandhome coordinates a wide range of practical projects in and around Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire offering many opportunities for people to get involved. Volunteers gain new skills and experiences whilst making a positive contribution to the local environment and their community. Yvonne begins, "We carry out a wide range of projects. For example we run Green Gyms which are half day, full day conservation and residential projects. Our projects focus on nature conservation, habitat management, habitat creation and improving access to nature. Within the scope of our habitat creation projects tasks include for example the creation of habitat piles, nest boxes for insects, birds and bats, replanting or creating wild flower meadows and planting trees. We currently also do a lot of path creation, bridge and boardwalk construction and a wide range of other wooden construction work to improve access to nature."

BTCV Aberdeen has two full time members of staff,



two Volunteer Officers (trainees) and approximately 35 volunteers. Yvonne explains, "Volunteers are trained onsite on tasks carried out on the day. The Volunteer Officers are fully trained with first aid and leadership training and help lead and supervise groups of volunteers or assist in the office, for example with fundraising or updating our internal database. On occasions various training courses are available throughout the year to further train volunteers for example on woodland management, drystone walling and on other relevant courses."

Yvonne continues, "Volunteering is a brilliant opportunity for individuals, especially if they are looking to work in the conservation field as it can provide invaluable work experience. We have a range of volunteers of various ages and backgrounds – retired people, students, people who are looking for work, part-time workers who give some of their spare time to volunteering and people who are recovering from mental health problems or physical injuries. Lots of our Volunteer Officers and volunteers have moved on to employment over the last years.

"Employers see the skills and training we provide our volunteers as transferable skills such as leadership and health and safety skills. Also any people working for BTCV now started off as a volunteer."

The national charity, supported for example by SNH, NHS and the Lottery, has a new strategic plan. Its new guiding principles are to provide a framework in which people can develop life skills, build healthy and sustainable communities, and continue to improve their environment. Projects and activities are developed with the assistance of BTCV business partners, national and regional governments, and many non-governmental organisations in the UK and abroad. Yvonne states, "The national strategic plan is to improve the



environment in 75,000 places, actively support 1.5m people in environmental action, provide opportunities to 500,000 people to become fitter and improve their mental health and, through our support, move 50,000 people into employment. We are proud to have the support of a private sector that recognises the value of BTCV work. We hope to make more partnerships with local communities and organisations throughout Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.”

BTCV Aberdeen currently has two new community based projects: the Sunnybank Park Community Green Gym Project launched on the 28th February this year and the Community Drystone Walling Project launched on the 1st April. The Sunnybank Park Project is a co-operation between the Friends of Sunnybank Park (FoSP), the local communities, Aberdeen Greenspace and BTCV and aims to improve the local green space for example by creating walks, improved wildlife habitats, seating areas, allotments and a pond. The drystone walling project gives individual communities the chance to get free training in drystone walling. Yvonne states, “Both projects are proving successful. They are community based with a lot of different people and groups working together for the same aims.

“The local community is working very hard to improve Sunnybank’s green space and make it into a beautiful place to visit. There is plenty of opportunity for anyone within the local community to come along and lend a hand. But please book a place in advance, to make sure we can accommodate everyone attending the Green Gym.” The Green Gym works at Sunnybank every Monday from 10am to 2:30pm.

Yvonne continues, “Over the next year we will be involved in all kinds of things such as habitat improvement, path work, stone cairn construction, rosebay willowherb control, various maintenance tasks, plus bird, bat and insect box building.

“The Drystone Walling project is a two year programme which offers free training to community groups on drystone walling. The first trial project was carried out in co-operation with the community group ‘Better Balmedie’ and was a real success.” Yvonne explains, “There are a lot of derelict walls around Aberdeen that are sadly getting replaced with cheap wire fences or are just abandoned and go derelict. It is a pity to see this distinctive and historical feature of the Scottish countryside disappear, therefore we felt motivated to do something about it. We applied for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund so, with the money in place, we are now appealing to all interested community groups to come forward. Everyone involved so far is really enthusiastic about it.”

BTCV Aberdeen is also involved in restoring two former quarries in Kemnay. Yvonne explains, “The quarries will be transformed into a public green space with a high ecological value. Besides some walks around the lochs there will be facilities for bird watching, picnic areas, wildflower meadows and more. Our main tasks will be to construct a path as well as jetties and pond dipping platforms at this stage of the project.”

BTCV has been shortlisted in the Environment and Conservation category for a prestigious Charity Award. The Charity awards recognise excellence in the leadership and management of charities. The ceremony takes place on the 9th June 2011 at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London.



Community Food Initiatives North East (CFINE)

CFINE (Community Foods Initiatives North East) works to improve health and wellbeing throughout Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and West Lothian by trading and supplying fruit and vegetables to communities, businesses and disadvantaged areas. The scheme encourages and supports volunteers, involving them in operating Community Food Outlets, FareShare and the Fast Fruit Scheme, all with the aim of promoting the consumption of healthy produce.

Third Sector Aberdeen visits Chief Executive, Dave Simmers and his trusty 16 year old working dog, Ben at the CFINE offices at 4 Poynerook Road, Aberdeen to learn more.

CFINE presently has 125 Community Food Outlets in various regeneration areas throughout Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and West Lothian. These outlets cater for people dealing with a variety of issues such as mental health problems, learning disabilities or homelessness; they also work with sheltered housing complexes. They provide fresh fruit, vegetables and dried goods at affordable prices within communities making produce accessible to everyone. Dave begins, "We exist for the least powerful and most vulnerable people in society. The **5 A's** underpin all the good work we do: firstly to ensure fruit and vegetables are as **Affordable**, **Accessible** and **Available** as possible to the more vulnerable and disadvantaged sectors of the community. Secondly, we aim to improve **Aptitude** as regards to skills, health and hygiene as well as improve **Attitude** by encouraging the importance and benefits of a good diet."

CFINE has established a FareShare scheme which organises and distributes supermarkets' and food producers' surplus foodstuffs to the homeless and people within regeneration areas who are experiencing food poverty. Last year the scheme distributed around 120 tonnes of surplus produce to the disadvantaged community. Dave explains, "We receive free food produce the food industry would otherwise dump in landfill and distribute to the vulnerable and disadvantaged such as the homeless, women's aid, the unemployed and people on disabilities and low income."

CFINE offer another service, Fast Fruit, which currently supplies produce to over 130 nurseries, schools and other youth and community organisations. Dave continues, "All the time we are trying to inform people and raise their

awareness of the importance of diet, health and wellbeing. We distribute leaflets to help sign post healthier ways of living."

The enterprise currently employs 19 staff members and 17 adults with learning difficulties in supported employment at the Fruit Mart, Aberdeenshire, a fruit and veg business which CFINE purchased in November 2010. It also has 130 volunteers who help in the warehouse and run community food outlets. Dave explains, "We have a superb, very committed and strong board of directors. We are also very proud of the fact that 11 out of our 19 employed staff have been recruited from our priority communities. Our volunteers gain a lot out of volunteering for us. They grow in status and confidence and many of our volunteers have received jobs after being with us. There are a whole range of benefits that come from volunteering. We also accept many school pupils for work experience and go out our way to ensure it is a positive and supportive experience for them."

CFINE also operates as a social enterprise, selling fruit and vegetables and other produce on a commercial but competitive basis. It works in partnership with circa 40 companies from the oil sector, restaurants and local eateries throughout Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, many of whom participate in the Healthy Working Lives scheme. Dave explains, "All profit is invested in the health and community development work we do in disadvantaged, excluded and vulnerable communities."

Dave continues, "One thing I keep saying is running a voluntary organisation is challenging but possible. Running a business is challenging but possible. Running a social enterprise where it is a social organisation which trades and generates income through its own produce but staying true to the social purpose is three times as challenging."

CFINE spoke about the most foreseeable problems for the organisation. Dave states, "We want to get to self sufficiency and intend to do that over the next few years but we still need some investment coming in from local authorities, Scottish Government, trusts and foundations. The key challenge facing us at the moment is the real pressure of cash flow."

Dave continues, "We have set challenging but achievable targets to increase our sales in both the social and

enterprise sides of the company. We are thinking imaginatively and creatively about how to develop networks and partnerships that are genuine and sincere that can strengthen all companies involved individually and together.”

One of the organisation’s achievements of the last 12 months was the purchase of the Fruit Mart at Longside, North Aberdeenshire. Dave explains, “The purchase of the Fruit Mart in Longside has given us an operational base. It was opened by Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment.”

CFINE also runs a successful unit in Stoneyburn, West Lothian, which they took over when the local community food organisation went into administration. Dave explains, “When I became aware of the sad circumstances in West Lothian, I stepped in and CFINE were able to re-establish the good work done there. Now we have staff and a unit based in West Lothian which is making approximately £10,000 sales a month. To have achieved this is very good.”

CFINE encourages other organisations in the Third Sector to get involved in its future projects. Dave explains, “We have now secured much better prices for buying produce and are enthusiastic about purchasing produce in bulk with other organisations. If we can work out a way to work together to get better prices, our charitable and enterprise customers get better prices and more affordable produce.”

Dave says, “We are particularly thankful of the oil companies who are in partnership with us. They recognise that trading with CFINE means investing in the local communities. They are receiving a quality service at a low cost price while at the same time helping to support the poorest members of the community.”

CFINE, an ACVO member, will be one of the many organisations taking part in the Celebrate Aberdeen Parade on Saturday 11th June and the Insight Aberdeen Volunteering Fayre on Saturday 2nd July 2011. Dave comments, “We are involved in ACVO events because we feel it’s an incredibly important opportunity to raise the profile of the sector within the city. It is also a great opportunity to celebrate all the hard work of our volunteers as they are the backbone of our organisation.

“We are currently in the process of organising a significant celebration of our own to reward all our volunteers within the city, North Aberdeenshire and West Lothian. We are trying to make it quite high profile and we hope to have some celebrities or high profile personalities involved.”

Dave states, “Our sector needs to start thinking differently and look to securing futures by collaboration or merger. This is essential in avoiding organisations going under. We must start working in partnership in order to become stronger together.”



Give Kids a Chance

'Helping Young People Achieve their Potential'

Give Kids a Chance helps around 150 disadvantaged children and young people between the ages of 10 and 18 in the Grampian region each year. The project supports and encourages young people to develop their own potential through participation in a range of sport and leisure based activities.

Third Sector Aberdeen met with Project Manager, Heather Wilson, at Denburn Health Centre to discuss how the organisation strives to improve the lives of young people each year.

Give Kids a Chance, which has been operating since 1997, is a Grampian-wide partnership project managed by the Aberdeen City Public Health Team. Heather states, "It was originally a Health Promotions project funded by The Scottish Drugs Challenge fund, with the aim to divert young people away from drugs and alcohol. A lot has changed in 13 years and although this is still part of what we do, we now concentrate our efforts on building confidence and self esteem. This helps young people develop their own social and practical skills and helps them develop to their full potential."

Every year there are a number of vulnerable young people who could potentially fall through the net. Heather explains, "Often there is a problem or difficulty that prevents them from fully integrating within a school community or taking advantage of the social and leisure opportunities within their own communities. Many young people referred to us are socially isolated or excluded from activities and are looking for that extra support to get involved."

Currently Give Kids a Chance is supporting 100 disadvantaged young people in Aberdeen to develop and sustain interests and hobbies that ultimately help to improve their health and wellbeing.

Give Kids a Chance provides mentors and role models to help encourage young people's confidence and self esteem and to promote positive lifestyle choices. Heather comments, "The GKAC music groups performed recently for parents and friends at Rosemount Community Centre. For a few of the young people this was their first stage performance. They had gone through a process of attending four workshop sessions to look at various aspects of their musical abilities and to prepare them for a performance. It was great to see their pride and sense of achievement after working so hard towards achieving a goal."

Give Kids a Chance co-ordinates quarterly referral review meetings throughout the year where new referrals are discussed. The project also reviews the children that are currently on the scheme on a quarterly basis. Heather states, "Most of the referrals to Give Kids a Chance are made by social work or teaching staff, community or family support workers and the voluntary sector. There is always someone making the referral who takes a role in supporting the young person. At our quarterly reviews, if we can identify a young person who had benefitted from involvement and no longer requires our support or is not using their place we can allocate it to someone else who needs it."

The initiative is run by two full time members of staff and fifteen part time staff who are a combination of youth workers, music tutors and sport coaches. A further 12 volunteers offer their services by fundraising, attending weekly activities and volunteering as escorts or drivers, taking young people to and from home and their weekly activity. Heather states, "Most of our drivers are paired up with a young person to drive on a regular basis. We only ask them to commit to one task a week so that it is manageable and to ensure the young person gets to know the volunteer. It would be a bit daunting if they were faced with a stranger every week, so it is nice if it is the same person."



Heather adds, “We are particularly proud of the work some of our tutors have done with young people helping them work towards Dynamic Youth and Youth Achievement Awards. This is something new for us this year and provides the young people with a recognised certificate of achievement for the efforts made at their activity.”

As the project has made a point of not acquiring resources such as buildings, vehicles or equipment it relies very much on partnership working and support. Heather explains, “Over the years we have worked in partnerships with others and shared resources wherever possible. This is a situation we would like to continue. Whether, in the current climate, that will be possible is still unknown – but we shall find out in due course.”

Currently Give Kids a Chance works in partnership with Sunnybank Community Education Team to provide a weekly cooking session for young people from the Sunnybank area, and music activities are delivered at Rosemount, Kincorth and Woodside Community Centres. Heather adds, “In the past we have been very fortunate to have partnership arrangements that have not involved money or payment. Resource has been available to Give Kids a Chance because we are supporting young people from those areas.”

The not-for-profit group is attached to the Public Health Team within Aberdeen City and as such are not seen as a voluntary organisation. Despite this, Give Kids a Chance is a member of ACVO and special interest groups such as Aberdeen Children’s Services Network, Aberdeen Volunteer Co-ordinator’s Forum and is a member of local charity, Aberdeen Play Forum. Heather explains, “We have support from the Public Health Team in the city and are based at Denburn Health Centre however we generate our own income to cover activity costs for the young people and some salary costs. It is certainly challenging to generate the income to deliver our activity program on a consistent yearly basis.”

The project is currently undergoing a review in order to identify areas for redesign or development. Heather explains, “We aim to maintain our current level of service and income during this period although we would also like to be able to support more children in Aberdeen as referrals have increased over the past year. We are awaiting the findings of the review before making any longer term plans for Give Kids a Chance but anticipate change in the near future. We have been around for 14 years so it seems the ideal time to review how we are meeting the needs of the young people we are aiming to support.”

Give Kids a Chance will be taking part in the Celebrate Aberdeen Parade and the Insight Aberdeen Volunteering Fayre. The organisation also coordinates two fundraising events a year: a Christmas campaign; and selling Spree Books. Heather explains, “We encourage our supporters to fundraise for us throughout the year but especially at Christmas. Last year we had concerts, Christmas hampers, raffles, cake sales and coffee mornings. Lots of people did different things to raise money for Give Kids a Chance and it worked very well for us raising over £8,000. The Grampian community has been generous to Give Kids a Chance over the years and we hope that will continue.”

Home-Start Aberdeen

Behind the bright pink door

Home-Start offers a service matching dedicated volunteers to families in need of support. Their fully trained volunteers visit families' homes to provide free, informal, friendly and confidential support to help parents cope with the struggles and stresses of everyday life.

Third Sector Aberdeen took a step through Home-Start's bright pink door to meet Senior Co-ordinator, Georgette Cobban, and new Health Development Co-ordinator, Bev Donald, at their premises at 25 Greenfern Road, Mastrick, Aberdeen.

The Home-Start scheme was founded in Leicester in 1973 by Margaret Harrison; there are now 340 affiliated schemes across the UK. Home-Start International was founded in 1998, working with communities across the globe, including British Forces families in Germany and Cyprus.

Georgette begins, "The Aberdeen scheme was initially set up in 1987 as Home-Start Mastrick and in 2004 grew to incorporate the whole city. We recruit, train and support volunteers who are usually parents themselves and match them with families facing a variety of issues from isolation, ill health, disability, substance misuse and domestic abuse. Sometimes the referral is for a family who has very little support around them and would benefit from the experience of a parent who has been through all the ups and downs they are experiencing."

Home-Start is able to reach families that other services might miss by supporting them within their own homes. It also provides group support in Kincorth Community Centre where parents can meet other families facing similar issues. Georgette explains, "Family Group, Mother and Toddler Sessions for Home-Start families allow parents to access adult learning opportunities while providing a stimulating play experience for the children. The group is a chance for families to access a whole raft of support provided by Home-Start volunteers, co-ordinators and group staff."

Last year with funding from NHS Grampian, Home-Start launched its new pilot health development project: Recipe for Life. The pilot scheme, funded until March 2012, offers Home-Start families advice and support about practical cookery, budgeting, breast feeding, weaning, oral health and general healthy living. Bev explains, "The project aim is to give children the best start in life by encouraging parents and providing them

with the skills and the confidence they need to eat healthily and cook for themselves. The goal is to get the whole family involved when teaching cooking skills in families' homes."

Bev continues, "A lot of parents are unsure about food hygiene and this reduces their confidence in cooking. I also teach them that by cooking healthier meals themselves, rather than depending on convenience foods that are high in salt and sugar, they can spend less and feed more mouths. I also teach parents how to make one meal that can be weaned down to feed both baby and family."

The project is now in its second phase with Bev currently training Home-Start volunteers to incorporate Health and Development into their weekly visits. Bev explains, "The project has recently been granted funding from the Mary Salmon Trust to put together cooking packs for volunteers to take to families' homes. Some families lack basic cooking utensils so with the use of these new packs volunteers can now incorporate cooking sessions once a month."

Home-Start has supported 119 families over the past year, with 20% of families referring themselves. With the increasingly high demand, there is a constant waiting list of approximately 35 families seeking their support. The service has 4 co-ordinators to support the 95 volunteers and trustees that make the home visits, 1 administrator and 2 group staff members. Georgette states, "Our volunteers are between the ages of 20 and 70 which is important. When we visit the families we will ask what kind of person they would like to visit them. Some people like the idea of someone of a similar age in a friend type role and others prefer more a parent/grandparent figure who they feel has more life experience. Part of our success is the time we take in ensuring we match families with the right people. We find it really makes a difference."

As demand continues to grow, so does the need for volunteers. Georgette explains, "Our waiting list is growing and we are now at the stage where a space is available on the scheme only when someone moves on. Our policy used to be to work with families until their eldest child reached 5 years old, however we now support families up to the point where they are in a better situation to move on. It is highly important that we continue to attract and retain quality volunteers. We simply cannot do it without them."

Another pressing problem facing the charity this year is funding. Georgette states, "We are working towards sustainability and developing the service to try and meet the demands. We want to develop a way of becoming more independent by becoming a social enterprise. Our board are excellent however we need to attract people with more business skills into our committee for advice and support."

Looking to the future, Home-Start is hoping to expand their premises. Georgette explains, "If we can develop as we would like we need to find larger and affordable premises. A room where Home-Start families can come and do something fun and cost-free would be so beneficial. We have talked with other partnerships about shared space but nothing so far. It would be great to develop the service a bit more."

New premises would also allow the charity to train volunteers on-site, something that Home-Start takes very seriously. Georgette explains, "I know the importance of having good quality support and training. Without the proper training, volunteers can

be unsure how to respond in certain situations. We provide all our volunteers with an 8 week course of preparation before being placed with a family. Also, each volunteer meets regularly with their coordinator and updates on the family's progress. There is also ongoing training throughout the year on topics that are relevant to their role. We are here to support the volunteers as much as the families we help."

Home-Start will be taking part in Celebrate Aberdeen in June and the Insight Aberdeen Third Sector and Volunteering Fayre. The charity also has other events on the horizon. Georgette explains, "Existing volunteers and their families organise many events for Home-Start throughout the year. In May we have rented the charity Shop on George Street for the week; in September there is a Race Night planned; and we have a runner taking part in the London Marathon."



Macmillan Cancer Support

Celebrating its centenary this year, Macmillan Cancer Support was established from a legacy left to Douglas Macmillan in 1911. After watching his father die of cancer, Douglas Macmillan used the ten pounds left to him by his father and established the 'Society for the Prevention and Relief of Cancer'. His aims were to provide advice and information to all people living with cancer.

Third Sector Aberdeen spoke with Fundraising Manager for the charity, Sheryl Wootton (pictured), who has been in post from December 2010, to see how the Macmillan Cancer Support is still campaigning for the same ideals a 100 years on.

Sheryl stated, "Douglas was looking for people to be treated in their own houses by nurses, if that was what patients wished for. He lobbied for better living standards and free or low cost accommodation for people with cancer."

Currently in the North of Scotland alone there are 145 Macmillan health care professionals. That is made up of 110 Nurses and 34 doctors, dieticians and physiotherapists. There is also a financial helpline with 20 Citizen Advice Bureau staff who are dedicated to providing financial advice and information from ensuring people are getting the correct benefits they are entitled to ensuring homes are not repossessed.

"Citizen Advice Bureau do a huge job. Macmillan can also offer patient grants, and although this is means tested, the average patient grant is £350. That can pay for things such as washing machines, pay for fuel costs and transport to the hospital for patients' treatments," Sheryl advised.

Macmillan provides a whole range of practical and emotional support. There are guides available such as The Cancer Guide, understanding and carers guides. Sheryl explained, "We provide emotional port through our helpline. Macmillan is often the first person that someone who has a diagnosis will tell and seek advice such as how to tell family members."



**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**

The one thing most people know of Macmillan Cancer Support is the medical support it provides however in total there are about 1,000 staff throughout the whole of the UK who work to fundraise and provide various services for people living with cancer, who do not form part of the Health Care Professionals team.

Macmillan, an ACVO member, receives little Government funding and is reliant on volunteers, fundraising and corporate partnerships. Currently in the Aberdeen offices there are nine members of staff and 30 volunteers that help out with office administration, events and fundraising activities. Sheryl stated, "By 2030 the amount of people living with cancer is likely to rise to four million. We have fundraising targets in place and are looking at ways in which we can serve more people. We are completely changing the ways that we are working and we have plans for that. Although we are a national charity we do have a local focus."

It is estimated Macmillan helps half of the two million people currently living with cancer in the UK. Sheryl stated, "We do hope in the future to be able to help and improve the lives of every single person living with cancer and encourage others to do the same."

In the North of Scotland Macmillan was able to spend £1.2m within the area after raising £1.04m last year through fundraising and legacies. This enabled the charity to fund new nurses and have the Citizen Advice Bureau resources still ongoing. Sheryl said, "The fact we were able to raise that is just phenomenal and is a real achievement in the last 12 months."



Macmillan holds a range of fundraising events throughout the year. In the up coming months is Macmillan's 21st birthday for The Worlds Biggest Coffee Morning on the 30th September, which raised £8m over the UK last year alone.

The Macmillan Big Fish will take place on Saturday 11 June 2011, The Longest Day Golf Challenge will take place in July and Pittodrie Stadium will again be hosting an adrenaline fuelled zipline over the pitch. The zipline starts at the very back seats of the Richard Donald stand where participants will be launched off a purpose built platform at speed and zip down to the opposite goal line. There is also team Macmillan who are running for the Balmoral and Baker Hughes 10k Race. Sheryl said, "We are looking to recruit more runners for that and we are also looking to recruit volunteers. We want to have the biggest presence at the running events, biggest squad and biggest supporters."

"For the corporate sector, as part of our 100th birthday celebration, we are looking to get 100 companies to sign up to fundraise £1,000 per company. They can do this through events, employee donations or company donations."

"We are currently recruiting for a World's Biggest Coffee Morning intern for a 3 month placement. It will give someone a fantastic opportunity in working in our biggest fundraising event from the start to finish. They will be working with PR contacts, working on event management and working with supporters. It is a great opportunity."

With the Scottish elections coming up in May, Macmillan has a huge campaign underway. Sheryl announced, "We try to get as many people signed up to an e-campaign so we can lobby the Government to ensure cancer care is on the top of the Politicians' priorities. We are campaigning to make sure that all cancers regardless will have the same kind of level of treatment or same access to treatment."

The last campaign Macmillan lobbied the Government about was for cancer patients to be part of the fuel freeze for vulnerable groups. Sheryl said, "We are still campaigning for cancer patients to receive energy bills that are less and a fuel freeze on their energy bills. Douglas Macmillan started off with a legacy and placing coal outside peoples houses because he knew cancer sufferers were affected more by the cold. We are still doing exactly what he did a hundred years on, just in a much bigger scale."

Rosie's Framers and Crafts Making Mental Health Services Fit People

Rosie's Framers and Crafts together with sister project, Rosie's Cafe and Takeaway comprise Aberdeen Social Enterprises, part of Turning Point Scotland. The Scottish charity support individuals with mental health problems to move on with their lives by helping them back into mainstream employment or further education.

Third Sector Aberdeen interviewed Craft Workshop Co-ordinator, Lisa Mann, at the Turning Point Scotland premises on Holburn Street to learn more about the services which the organisation provides.

Aberdeen Social Enterprises is funded through a combination of grants which include resource transfers and mental health specific grants from Aberdeen City Council, The Big Lottery, as well as the enterprise's own business income.

The enterprises situated in Aberdeen City are: Rosie's Picture Framing; Rosie's Gift Shop; Rosie's Craft Workshop; and Rosie's Cafe. Lisa states, "We recently rebranded to Rosie's logo to tie in with our Sister project Rosie's Cafe located on Rosemount. A lot of people do not recognise us as being a partnership but we run to exactly the same aims and support the same people."

These enterprises are for people experiencing or recovering from mental health problems. Rosie's provide vocational training, work experience and real employment opportunities along with permitted work earnings to service users whilst providing a high quality service to the general public. Placement users are offered a one year contract within one of the Rosie's projects *(with the possibility of extending to up to two years). Lisa explains, "It varies. People may be ready to move on to something new after four months or it may take up to the whole two years. We always support people onto whatever it is they want to do. Currently one of our users has been accepted to attend college. We supported her with the application and making a portfolio as well as accompanying her to the college, making sure she knows her way around and the best bus routes to take to get her there and home again. We always make sure users have somewhere



to go and that they are completely ready to move off."

Lisa explained a little about each of the Rosie's enterprises.

Rosie's Picture Framing, based on Holburn Street, is a fully functioning picture framing workshop which offers services to the public. Lisa explains, "We have one framing workshop coordinator who teaches and supports ten service users in picture framing skills as well as social team building skills and working to tight deadlines. They learn the key skills to picture framing with an option to apply to qualify for a picture framing qualification. We help them with their CVs and quite a majority of people tend to want to work within picture framing after they have done a bit of it downstairs."

Rosie's are keen to form partnerships with other organisations and businesses which share their aims. Lisa continues, "We have just set up a partnership with Send-It, a company beside Aberdeen College who do a lot of different printing. They also support individuals who are suffering from mental health and anxiety. They



now supply us with the canvases and we frame them.”

Rosie’s Craft workshop offers handmade greeting cards and party invitations made to the clients’ specification. They also provide a custom cushion making service, handmade bags and various other arts and crafts products. Lisa, a former Art and Design graduate, explains, “At the moment we support 15 individuals so during that time they come and learn key skills such as time keeping, good attendance, working in a team and working to deadlines. At the same time, they are also learning new craft skills so we teach them the basics in sewing, card making, pattern cutting, papier mache... there are so many different things to the craft workshop. It is almost like an art therapy based session as a lot of people working in the creative industry find it quite therapeutic and rewarding.”

At the Holburn Street Turning Point Scotland building the enterprise is currently setting up another venture:

Rosie’s Wedding Stationery. Lisa explains, “We are currently working from the craft workshop making wedding stationery part time but it has really taken off. I have a lot of experience in bridal so we have the knowledge and the background. The new project, Rosie’s Wedding Stationery, will give us an additional five service user placements which is fantastic. We are quite limited for space and there is a waiting list, in particular for the craft workshop as it is quite a sought after workshop for people who are ready to move on. The five extra places will be extremely beneficial.”

Rosie’s hope to officially launch the new project in July this year. Lisa states, “The new workshop room will have the best in design products and

produce high quality products. We have applied for two grants to cover the costs for starting up the new business venture.”

Rosie’s Gifts sell all the products from Rosie’s workshops as well as high quality gifts, crafts and original art work from a wide range of local and international artists. The shop, situated at 45- 49 Holburn Street, is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm and Saturday from 9.30am to 2.30pm, and is run with the help of service users and volunteers. Lisa states, “We always make sure we stock our gift shop with products by local artists. We attend art and craft fairs to make new contacts and also supply crafts from artists throughout Scotland.”

Rosie’s Cafe at 137 Rosemount Place offers a variety of high quality, good value breakfast foods and lunches. Lisa explains, “A lot of people go onto part time or full time employment after volunteering in the cafe because they have to be more work orientated as they work with the general public taking orders. Someone from the cafe recently went off to Dobbie’s Garden Centre to work in the catering there.”



The Sign Poster Project

'Working with Older People in YOUR Community'

The Sign Poster Project is a VSA Project, working in partnership with Aberdeen City Council, Cash in Your Pocket and Age Scotland. The project works within local communities throughout Aberdeen City to provide information and a referral service to older people.

Third Sector Aberdeen met with Project Co-ordinator, Dennis Moore, (pictured) at the project office within the VSA on Castle Street, to learn more.

Dennis began, "The project was set up under the auspices of Aberdeen City Council who engaged in a pilot project with the Scottish helpline for old people, Age Scotland. We decided to run with it and take it forward. It was supported by what is now a current referral agency: Cash in Your Pocket Partnership.

"The project started officially in April 2009 when it received funding from Aberdeen City Council to get things up and running. VSA are the hosts providing management facilities for the project and Age Scotland awarded us further funding."

The principle mission of the Sign Poster Project is to use local connections to provide older people within Aberdeen with information about services which could help and improve their quality of life. The project works to encourage people over 50 to take up benefits and services that can improve their health and wellbeing. Dennis states, "Aberdeen's Older People's Sign Poster Project provides a link for the people within a community to access services and information. Our referral agency, Cash in Your Pocket Partnership, covers everything from helping with benefits, home installations, energy saving, fuel suppliers, low cost loans, low cost foods, saving costs, to helping people get back into employment."

The project is run by one Co-ordinator, Dennis, and currently 16 volunteers who cover 9 communities: Seaton; Northfield; Kittybrewster; Bridge of Don; Tullos; Torry; Cove; Altens; and Woodside. Dennis, who volunteers as a Sign Poster in his free time, explains, "What we try to provide is various information, in a community setting, throughout the city. Sign Posters, who are all volunteers, mix within their own community. They might see someone at the bus stop, supermarket or local shop and ask if they know about the current changes to, for example, the pension service."

The project provides training and support for its volunteers as well as awareness training on a regular basis. Dennis explains, "Sign Posters give people a flavour of what is available with regards to different pension schemes or new benefits, for example. Sign Posters are not experts but, if there is an issue, they know which agency will help and with permission will make contact with that agency on people's behalf."

Sign Posters also approach individual community groups such as pensioners clubs, church groups and community lunch clubs. Recently, Sign Posters invited members of the Scottish Youth Parliament to teach older people various things from how to use mobile phones, access social networks via computers to even introducing them to a Wii Console. Dennis remarks, "Everyone had a great time. We even taught the younger ones a thing or two. It is a good example of how we all have to learn from each other. There are 20 to 30 different pensioners groups, coffee clubs, lunch clubs, older persons groups and discussion clubs that we want to prepare mini presentations for. Awareness of the project is a key element, especially as we want to develop to the point where one of the first calls people make, when seeking information, will be to Sign Posters."

Sign Posters also participate in the Older Persons Advisory Group and are currently advising the Council on the needs of older people. In September, there will be an Older Peoples Festival with a whole series of fun events lined up throughout the month. This year the opening events are a Master Chef challenge and a Mad Hatter's Tea Party.

The Sign Poster Project has also attend various promotional, development and governance events organised by ACVO. Upcoming events include, having an exhibition hall at the Insight Aberdeen Third Sector and Volunteering Fayre on Saturday 2nd July 2011 and the Celebrate Aberdeen Parade on Saturday 11th June.

Dennis explains that the main problem facing the Sign Poster Project is ensuring that the flow of information is current and accessible. "It is all about informing people however we can only inform a certain amount of people with the resources we currently have. One of our future targets is to have

A Sign Poster volunteer in every community in the city. To achieve this we need more people to recruit as Sign Poster Volunteers. We also aim to provide more training and more access for Sign Posters."

Anyone above 18 years old can be a Sign Poster. Dennis remarks, "Every referral is an achievement and every volunteer who has become a Sign Poster has gained a lot out of it. In this world you have to get on with people one way or the other and if you can gain information and access services it is not only an achievement but it is the right thing to do."

The Sign Poster Project has recently produced a new strategy on how to promote and develop its project. Dennis explains, "We want to work in partnership with everyone. That is the way you successfully gain information. We work in partnership, we share the information and people benefit from it. What we all do is important for the community and we need to respect each other's facilities and services. We do not have all the answers but we can help refer people to an organisation that does."



Silver City Surfers

The Age of Information

Silver City Surfers is a free drop-in centre for people over 55 which offers friendly one to one tutoring in basic computer skills. Originally a voluntary run organisation, Silver City Surfers became a registered charity in May 2010.



Third Sector Aberdeen dropped in to one of their weekly sessions at The Citadel on Castle Street to speak with Chairperson and former Councillor and Lord Provost, Margaret Smith, and Co-ordinator, Christine Dunhill, about their free service.

Margaret began, "Silver City Surfers is a constituted community group run mainly by volunteers in order that older people can both communicate by computer and easily access information. We ensure that we concentrate on 5 to 6 basic computer skills. The most important feature here is that our tutoring is one to one. This has proved the most successful decision of this organisation."

Christine continues, "It is a wonderful thing to help people get onto the computer so they can communicate with their relatives, find out information, save money and buy items and services online. There are all sorts of things people can do which can help them to feel connected."

Silver City Surfers is not an internet cafe but there is a social aspect to the sessions which is wonderful to observe. Clients are greeted by hospitality volunteers upon arrival and encouraged to sit and chat with cups of tea and biscuits while waiting for a session. Christine states, "We ask individuals what they want to learn and the tutors will give them support tailored to what they are looking for. There are so many wonderful things that people have learned to do – for example, a lot of relatives move abroad and so clients learn how to send emails and receive photos of their grandchildren; brilliant!"

Margaret adds, "We have a lot of clients with different needs, long term and short term. Absolute beginners may attend for four weeks then perhaps have learned enough to move onto another service."

The drop-in sessions offer basic computer skills tuition ranging from starting up and shutting down the computer to setting up an email address, sending and receiving emails, attachments and pictures. Tutors also show clients other basic computer skills such as word processing, printing and spread sheets. Margaret expresses, "It is all about communication; people need to be helped or they are going to be left out. There is also a wellbeing aspect to having a computer; it keeps your mind alert while also keeping people in touch with their families."

Silver City Surfers sessions take place every Wednesday and Friday from 10am to 1pm in The Salvation Army Computer Suite situated in The Citadel there are also two outreach projects, in Tullos on a Thursday morning and Seaton on a Monday morning from 11am to 1pm. Margaret states, "The outreach projects are a real achievement as they have taken a while to establish. There is now a regular flow of users and Seaton and Tullos people no longer need to come into the city centre."

A further outreach in Altens could also be on the cards. Margaret explains, "It is in the exploratory stage where Altens are to ensure that what they are providing in way of resources is fit for purpose. It is important that when our tutors go into an outreach place that the people offering their resources and facilities have it all set up and ready."

Christine adds, "We reimburse our volunteers' travel expenses. It should not cost our volunteers anything to help out; they are giving up their time and sharing their skills which is really appreciated."

The Charity has up to 25 tutor, hospitality and committee volunteers. Margaret stresses the constant need for more volunteers. "In a way, it is almost a drop-in for them too. In the Citadel there are 9 stations so we need a minimum of at least 6 tutors. Occasionally we drop below the number we need which means people need to wait longer for their session. At an average session we have anything between 12 to 20 computer users and maximums of 32 users at times which can be difficult to handle."

As part of the Digital Unite Silver Surfers Day, the charity is having an open day on the 20th May 2011 from 11am till 1pm at the Citadel in the city centre and also an open day on the 19th May 2011 at Tullos Community Centre from 11am till 1pm. Christine expresses, "Everyone over the age of 55 is invited to see how we are helping people learn basic computer skills and get onto the internet. We are hoping that more people will know about us; that it's free and feel they can come along and they can do it too."

Silver City Surfers, who are ACVO members, will also be taking part in the Celebrate Aberdeen parade on Saturday 11th June 2011 and the Insight Aberdeen: Third Sector and Volunteering Fayre on Saturday 2nd July 2011. Christine announces, "We are also going up to the HUB at Aberdeen University to have a session there and invite students to come and learn what we are doing and whether they would like to get involved either as a tutor or hospitality volunteer."

The self funded group managed to raise £1,800 last year after hiring the George Street charity shop. The charity was also allocated funding by the Fairer Scotland Fund for its outreach services. Margaret expresses her relief, "We were successful in achieving funding for the next year which, given the funding situation, we are very pleased about. It is a mark of the contribution we are seen to be making to older people in the City. But it is important that we keep a close eye on current finances, as we need to look beyond the finances of this year."

Silver City Surfers is constantly seeking future partnerships with other organisations in the city. The charity is currently in negotiations with the Mither Kirk project about acquiring a computer suite within the new premises. We would be happy to talk to any organisation about sharing resources that deal with older people. We wish to promote ourselves more widely and are looking to set up partnerships with a number of other organisations who have the same aims."

Doreen Lennie , Silver City Surfers User:

"My daughter got me a computer before she went abroad. It was at that point that I panicked because I could not even type never mind anything else so they set it up for me. I went to classes at Rosemount but I found they were teaching you how to file things away which I thought was confusing. All I wanted to do was learn how to email my daughter and send photos. I have been coming to Silver City Surfers for a while now and the volunteers are so friendly. Never has one of them said, 'No don't do it that way'. I think it is great. I find it is good for me and keeps me in touch with my daughter which is the main thing for me.

"I think it is the ideal thing for senior citizens to get involved in, especially if you have family and friends abroad. It is so good here – they explain things and I think that is what we need more. The classes were great but it was not what I needed. We need more things like this for our age group."



Transition Extreme: Supporting Young People to Harness their Energy and Reach their Potential

Established in April 2007, social enterprise and registered Scottish charity Transition Extreme, assists young people in Aberdeen City & Shire to make the transition from childhood to adulthood through increased participation in extreme sports and positive recreational activities.

Third Sector Aberdeen met with their Chief Executive, Grahame Paterson, at Transition Extreme Sports Limited, Links Road, Aberdeen to learn more about the organisation.

Transition Extreme hosts facilities and coaching for skateboarding, BMXing, inline skating and climbing. It also provides a creative zone, pool table, Energy Cafe, meeting facilities, retail unit and recreational space. Grahame begins, "Transition Extreme has a really interesting background. Within the city there was significant unmet demand for skateboarding and similar urban sports. Through his time in the USA our founding Chief Executive, Neil Stevenson recognised that activities such as skateboarding, particularly in an urban setting, were ideal for engaging young people in a positive physical activity to divert them away from negative recreational pastimes. It was Neil's commercial abilities, drive and passion which managed to create this wonderful centre. He worked closely with Aberdeen City Council and others to deliver something really special - not just for young people

in Aberdeen City and Shire, but for schools, community organisations, businesses and the many thousands of extreme sports enthusiasts that live in, or visit, the region."

The centre has recently opened a beginners' training area within the skate park where young people from the age of 5 can practice before entering the bigger complex. The area was launched by a group of young people from Transition Extreme's 'Alternative Academy'. The complex caters for all individuals working to various levels within their chosen sport and is recognised by the Mountaineering Council of Scotland as a Regional Centre of Excellence. The centre has also developed a room where young people can hold band meetings and practice sessions. Grahame states, "Our indoor climbing centre and skatepark is one of the best in the UK and is a fabulous asset for the whole region."

The organisation works to connect with disadvantaged young people from across Aberdeen City and Shire. Grahame explains, "Through our outreach projects (currently funded by the Fairer Scotland Fund) we take our sports activities into the community focusing on regeneration areas like Northfield and Torry to break down barriers, make

connections and engage with young people in positive activities. We provide free training sessions and try and create ways they can continue their interest in the sport and bring them into the centre. We also operate a Community Access Fund which is targeted at organised youth and community groups within the regeneration areas, and offers pre-paid coached sessions within the Centre."

In addition to its standard sport and leisure activities, Transition



Extreme successfully runs Easter & Summer Camps, corporate team building days and its more established Alternative Academy project. The Alternative Academy, which was previously funded by the Robertson Trust and now in part by the Fairer Scotland Fund, is a 12 week full-time programme for young people who are disengaged from education. It offers 15 to 18 year olds an opportunity to participate in various non-conventional sports.

Grahame explains, "The Alternative Academy is the result of a knowledge transfer partnership between Aberdeen University, Aberdeen College and Transition Extreme. It is designed for young people who are at risk of leaving, or not in, the educational system. There is a lot of team building, communications, enterprise components, project work and outdoor sport challenges. We have a very high success rate of people coming through the programme and moving forward in their lives to positive destinations. Apart from the confidence and skills they gain there are also tangible qualifications such as first aid and youth achievement awards."

Module one of the Alternative Academy programme trains individuals in a sport of their choice and works with them to help them progress to coaching level. The second module sends them to different sporting venues where they get to try different sports; this is made possible by partnerships between Transition, RGU Sport, martial arts services and Aberdeen City Council. The third module focuses on employability & healthy living, teaching them interview, application and presentation skills as well as providing a range of information and techniques for leading a healthy life. The final module focuses on events management.

The organisation is currently seeking to develop a Curriculum for Excellence module for schools to aid young people in education. Grahame states, "We are recognised as a very effective social enterprise that provides top quality facilities for young people and a fabulous environment for learning across a range of subjects. But we are much more than just a great place to go – Transition Extreme represents a philosophy whereby we believe that if young people harness their energy they can reach their full potential and we see that philosophy transferred through our staff to our customers, whether in the Centre or out in the Community. There is a real and positive impact on young people whether it's simply through the joy and benefits of healthy activity within a world-class sports setting or something more profound in terms of changing behaviours, outlook and abilities whilst making that difficult transition into adulthood."

Transition Extreme has been recognised for 5 major



awards since it opened 4 years ago: Socially Responsible Business of the Year 2008; Come to Aberdeen Trophy 2007; Grampian Business Awards, Business Success Under 3 years 2008; Ernst and Young Scotland Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2008; and COSLA Gold Award for Excellence in Local Democracy and Community Planning 2010. They have had over 360,000 people pass through their door over the past four years, with the number continuing to rise.

Transition Extreme has 8 main staff and 45 part time staff members. All of their Climbing instructors are highly trained professionals who work to support, challenge and motivate young people to move towards positive destinations. Grahame states, "We have highly competent instructors within our Climbing Centre, and experienced coaches who understand how to deliver great experiences. They also understand the challenges young people are going through in the community and so are good ambassadors that parents and partner organisations trust. Our staff team have a passion for their sport but also compassion for young people. We believe in the potential every young person has within them, and our task is sometimes to help elicit that. Most importantly we want to deliver service excellence and use that as a basis for other things."

Climbing Wall Centre Duty Manager, Johannes states, "We offer a range of school and holiday activities such as fun clubs and adult courses. We train a lot of parents so they can sign in their children. We offer lessons of various levels to teenagers from different schools and support units to teach them the benefits of climbing. Employing qualified professionals and maintaining the wall is very expensive but we try and make it affordable. We try our best to seek out funding for groups and individuals to use the climbing facilities. It is really a rewarding lifestyle activity if picked up on from a young age as climbing is a lot about teaching individuals responsibility, eliminating fear and developing trust."

'developing, supporting and representing the third sector'



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