



**Cornwall Centre for
Volunteers**

Caradon Volunteer Development Agency

**Shop B, 6 Church Street,
Liskeard**

Annual Review 2004/2005

Summary

Caradon Volunteer Development Agency continues to play a vital role in enhancing community participation, tackling social exclusion and supporting the community and voluntary sector throughout Caradon.

The economic and social benefits of volunteering to any community are both quantitative and qualitative. New volunteer placements alone have generated an extra 289 hours each week (equivalent to 7.7 full time workers) to community activity throughout Caradon, with each hour being effectively used working with young people, older people, people with disabilities, ex-offenders, women in crisis, homeless people, people with mental health problems, animals and environmental conservation.

Such volunteering creates cohesion amongst communities, breaking down social barriers that exist and challenges attitudes and beliefs. It also contributes to the sustainability of our community by empowering individuals to actively get involved in issues that affect their community.

Most importantly, volunteering brings about many benefits to the individual volunteer. It can create a learning environment for people wishing to gain experience prior to obtaining employment or changing career direction. It creates new social networks for people, builds confidence and can give individuals the opportunity to acquire accredited training qualifications. And it enables people to feel valued and respected, self-satisfied even, knowing that they are helping people, animals or the environment.

Over 600 people have come to us to receive advice and guidance on volunteering during the last year. This is an increase in the numbers of people we saw during 2003/2004, despite our office operating on reduced hours due to staff shortages.

There is a great deal of work that supports the 'front-line' service we provide to potential volunteers, and is critical to the continued success of our work. During the last year we have continued to operate effectively and successfully throughout all of our six core functions. However we are always looking at ways in which we can improve the services we deliver, and welcome opportunities to further develop.

Demand for volunteers by volunteer-involving organisations is increasing, and it is therefore getting harder to recruit people willing to volunteer. The launch by Gordon Brown for 2005 being the Year of the Volunteer will hopefully enable us

to raise the profile of volunteering even further and support local community and voluntary organisations requiring volunteers.

Our Six Core Functions: _

1. Brokerage

We aim to match suitable volunteers to volunteer opportunities that are available throughout Caradon. This function has two main elements. The work that we do with individuals wishing to volunteer, and the work we do with the 'host' organisation requesting volunteers.

649 individuals accessed our service during 2003/2004, enquiring about volunteering or a volunteer related issue. Our work involves not only recruiting volunteers, but supporting volunteers in any way we can. This support can take the form of answering queries about expenses for volunteering, transport to their voluntary placement, training to support their volunteering or discussing an issue that has arisen at their voluntary placement.

78 individuals who accessed our service wanted to 'enrol' as a volunteer with our agency and find voluntary work, and **51** individuals were successfully placed in suitable voluntary roles.

These new placements generated an additional 289 hours of voluntary work each week, which has an economic value of £2,563 each week. The average economic value of the voluntary hours worked by all our registered volunteers is currently in excess of £20,000 each week.

2. Marketing volunteering

As the demand for volunteers increases it is vital that we are as effective as we can be in marketing volunteering opportunities. This is often very difficult for us as we have such restricted resources and funds available.

However, we use the limited resources available to us, and our time, as effectively as possible to ensure that volunteering opportunities are up to date and are made available to people throughout the district.

In addition to opportunity lists being produced periodically and being available as a hard copy and on our website, we also have displays at local libraries throughout the district and deliver talks / presentations to local groups. We also have a column in the Cornish Times every two to four weeks advertising different opportunities.

Involvement in community events is central to our marketing strategy, and enables us to talk face to face to members of the public, and to network effectively with our existing host organisations and identify potential new organisations.

There have been a number of events that we have been involved in throughout this year, including;-

- Antique Folk Show at Dobwalls Theme Park
- Plymouth University's Active in Communities Volunteering Fair
- Royal Cornwall Show

3. Good practice development

We offer advice and support to volunteer involving organisations on all issues relating to volunteer management, including recruitment and retention of volunteers, volunteer policies, health and safety, insurance and equal opportunities.

A county-wide forum for volunteer managers is facilitated by Cornwall Centre for Volunteers and the Volunteer Development Agency Managers from the five districts of Caradon, Kerrier, Carrick, Restormel and North Cornwall.

This forum enables managers to network, learn and share best practice volunteer management, and often hosts training sessions on issues such as Volunteers and the Law, and Dealing with Difficult Volunteers.

4. Develop volunteering opportunities

We will work with any community group or individuals wishing to set-up a community group that will involve new volunteering opportunities being available.

We also work with our existing organisations to regularly update the opportunities they have available.

During this year we have identified **28** new host organisations, and have received **157** requests from hosts for volunteers for a diverse range of opportunities.

We are also committed to encouraging more informal volunteering for people. This gives people the opportunity to have a 'taster' of volunteering whilst still making a difference to their community, and to their own quality of life.

Under this remit of informal volunteering, we organise and co-ordinate regular beach cleans or help out on environmental conservation projects.

5. Policy response and campaigning

As members of Volunteering England we periodically respond to a wide range of policies and consultations about policies which ultimately affect volunteering and all those involved nationally.

Local and county level policy response is also something that we strive to take a lead in, especially in policy that directly affects the capacity and efficiency of the community and voluntary sector. Cornwall Centre for Volunteers has been heavily involved in the development of Cornwall's COMPACT.

We also campaign where inequality may exist in volunteering, such as age discrimination, racism, rural isolation and lack of volunteer expenses.

6. Strategic development of volunteering

We and the other Volunteer Development Agencies under Cornwall Centre for Volunteers contribute to and influence the strategic development of volunteering at both local, county, regional and national levels.

The VDA's of Carrick, Kerrier and North Cornwall represent the Voluntary and Community Sector with a focus on volunteers and volunteer involving organisations at Local Strategic Partnership Level.

At Caradon, whilst we do not sit directly on the Local Strategic Partnership, we are involved in the focus groups ; - Vulnerable People Action Group and Environmental Action Group, with the Millennium volunteer co-ordinator sitting on the Young People Action Group.

At a county level, Cornwall Centre for Volunteers is heavily involved in the Change-up programme, and is part of the Cornwall Infrastructure Partnership.

Nationally, the most important strategic development of volunteering that we have been involved with is the Russell Commission and the White Paper for Young People and Youth Volunteering. We are hopeful that with the great

success achieved by the Millennium Volunteer team, we will be able to lead on any other new initiatives that are developed by government.

Looking Ahead

Caradon Volunteer Development agency is keen to build on the successes of this year, and is both enthusiastic and positively optimistic about the future. The Year of the Volunteer will continue to provide us with a focus for initiatives that will raise the profile of volunteering to the community as a whole.

A funding bid to the Active Community Fund that is specifically designed to help support Volunteering Development Agencies in marketing the Year of the volunteer will enable us to introduce a number of initiatives and some of these initiatives will be sustainable beyond 2005.

We will be upgrading our current database to Volunteering England's V-Base, and the National Volunteer Opportunity Website database called 'Do-it'. The purchase of lap-tops will enable us to provide out-reach work to communities who are harder to reach be it through rural isolation, cultural difference or disability.

A new district-wide forum will be facilitated by the Caradon Volunteer Development agency, in order to improve both the effectiveness of our work but also that of host-organisations involving volunteers. Informal discussions with some hosts, and the evaluation of the county-wide manager's forum has shown that such a forum is needed and can be very effective in addressing issues faced by smaller, local organisations, improving standards and performance.

Our long term aim is to develop an employee volunteering programme for both public and private sector organisations to buy in to. Much research has shown that such initiatives make prudent business sense, increasing staff morale and productivity, as well enhancing corporate image responsibility.

However, it is important that we and all our stake holders realise that the continued success and delivery of such services is heavily reliant on financial investment. Grants, such as the one we hope will be successful from the Active Communities Fund only serve to fund very short term new initiatives. In order that we can develop services and new initiatives such as those mentioned above, our core functions need to be adequately financially supported.

Caradon Volunteer Development Agency is currently funded to only 20% of its total running costs. With this in mind, future efforts will focus on securing more sustainable sources of funding for the work we currently do.