



Volunteer Development Session

23rd April 2015

Introduction

North Lanarkshire Carers Together (NLCT) held its first Carer Development Session on the 23rd of April 2015. The organisation believes that carers and ex-carers have a valuable role to play in helping us achieve our objectives and would like to see more carers getting involved in the wide range of work that we are involved in. NLCT is a carer led organisation that was formed in 1999 to give carers a voice and from our inception carers have played a central role in the development and growth of the organisation.

Over the past number of years the number of carers involved in our work has declined somewhat and as an organisation we want to change this trend. We have recognised the need to be more proactive in relation to volunteer recruitment and the development session that took place on the 23rd of April, is the start of that process. We recognise that for a number of reasons not all carers want to become volunteers and we fully understand this, however for those who do, we want to ensure that they have the opportunity to do so and that their involvement is valued and supported.

In order for a person to volunteer for any organisation they firstly need to know who the organisation is, secondly, what it is they do, and thirdly, is it of interest to them. The development session programme was devised to consider the points highlighted above with a World Café format incorporated to enable participants to discuss in more detail the range of volunteering opportunities available within NLCT.

Liz Seaton Chairperson North Lanarkshire Carers Together

Liz introduced the session and provided an overview of the Aims and Objectives of NLCT. Liz discussed the growth of the organisation and for the need to develop our volunteers and our volunteering strategy. Liz's hope was that the session gives attendees a flavour of the various levels of volunteering opportunities that exist within NLCT and encouraged everyone that after the session if they were keen to become involved, we would look to link skills and available time commitment to one or some of our 4 levels of volunteering. The 4 levels include:

- **Carer consultations**
- **Supporting the identification of carers**
- **Representing Carers' views at strategic planning groups**
- **Becoming a Director of North Lanarkshire Carers Together**

NLCT recognise that a volunteer is someone, who without financial reward performs a task at the request of, and on behalf of an organisation the staff and directors of NLCT hugely value the support of any contribution made. No matter what level of volunteering volunteers become involved with NLCT will provide support and training to ensure volunteers are supported in that role as well as reimbursement of all out of pocket reasonable expenses.

Liz indicated that participants would hear more about the opportunities that exist throughout the session and hoped that those present could assist in volunteering opportunities and indeed the shaping of our volunteering strategy as we move forward.

Liz concluded the overview by informing participant's about her own personal involvement with NLCT and the benefits she gained as a result of volunteering as well as how her caring experience influenced the organisation and partnership working.

Sean Harkin Carer Development Officer

Representing Carers Views at Strategic Planning Groups.

Sean give a presentation on how NLCT ensures that we deliver on our aims by influencing policy development and service provision at the planning stage and to forming active links between cares and professionals.

Sean informed participants about his role in the following planning groups:

- **Reshaping Care for Older People Programme**
- **Short Breaks Development Programme**
- **Community Capacity Building & Carer Support**
- **Integration of Health & Social Work Services**

Sean highlighted the importance of representing carers views within the various planning groups stressing the key role that NLCT play at this level. Ensuring that carer's needs and rights are promoted within partnerships is critical in relation to carer support and the allocation of resources. Sean gave an example of the role that carers played in the Short Breaks Development Programme and stressed the difference they made to the overall programme.

Sean provided information to participants on the various groups that carers are involved in:

- **Carers Strategy Implementation Group**
- **Older People's Partnership Board**
- **Consultation/Reviews**
- **Shadow Integration Board**

Sean discussed the key role that carers have played within the various partnerships and the ways in which they have influenced professional thinking. The long standing involvement of carers in the Carers Strategy Implementation Group has resulted in the co-production of the North Lanarkshire Carers' Strategy.

Frances McKay/Carolanne Christie

Carer Information Workers

Frances and Carolanne discussed their role with participants highlighting the importance of carers having access to relevant and timely information.

Carolanne and Frances engage with carers on a daily basis, attend a wide range of community based events and regularly participate in consultations/reviews. Recent examples of NLCT involvement in the Out of Hours Service Review and the Scottish Governments' consultation on the Carers Bill were discussed and the important and critical contribution that carers can make through their involvement in such processes.

Frances and Carolanne talked about some of the key partnerships that they are involved in:

Local Community Groups- Frances and Carolanne discussed the wide range of groups that they are involved with within the community ensuring that information is provided on carer support.

Community learning and Development- Frances and Carolanne talked about the effective partnership that they have forged with colleagues from CL&D and how the partnership has enhanced support for carers.

Social Work - Frances and Carolanne discussed their involvement with Social Work Services and about the need for them to keep abreast of changes to the way people are supported enabling them to provide carers with up to date information on the ways in which support can be accessed.

Lanarkshire Carers Centre - Carolanne and Frances highlighted the strong partnership that exists with Lanarkshire Carers Centre and the key role they play in sign posting carers for a range of support.

Kamil/Anne Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire (VANL).

Kamil and Anne provided an overview on volunteering which included:

- **Top 10 reasons to Volunteer**
- **Training for Volunteers**
- **The role of Volunteers**
- **The role of Host Organisations**
- **The role of VANL**
- **Your success is our success**

Volunteering provides physical and mental rewards, reduces stress and makes people healthier, as well as bringing people together and strengthening communities. Kamil highlighted the training on offer from VANL and the role that a host organisation would play in the support of volunteers. The presentation was well received and demonstrated the ways in which VANL could assist NLCT in the development and support of volunteer involvement.

World Café Discussion Groups

Participants moved into World Café discussion groups where they had the opportunity to hear more about the areas of work that they could potentially get involved in with North Lanarkshire Carers Together. The discussions focussed on:

- **Strategic Involvement**
- **Directorship and Governance**
- **Consultations and Events**

Staff and Directors facilitated the round table discussions and moved to different tables in order to give attendees the opportunity to discuss all of the above areas. All of those present were asked 4 questions based around the skills and experience needed to be involved, skills and experience they may have that would assist their involvement, potential barriers to volunteering and what motivation may be required in order to become a volunteer.

Strategic Involvement

What Skills/Experience/Abilities do you feel is required to take on the role of volunteer at a Strategic Level/Director Level/Consultations/Reviews?

- Personal carer experience and understanding of issues faced by carers.
- Listening skills.
- Need to be effective, know what you are doing and who you are representing.
- Keeping abreast of Policy and Strategy changes.
- Communicating skills verbally/reporting.

Directorship/Governance

- Being able to communicate effectively.
- Non Judgemental.
- Time/Availability.
- Good Listener, Dedication, Commitment.
- Understanding of organisational structure.

Events/Consultations

- Personal experience of caring
- Skills in specialist conditions, i.e. dementia.
- Listening skills
- Need to be Supported and Prepared. (Role of NLCT).
- Need to knowledgeable/Understanding of Organisation
- Good Communication Skills
- Reliable
- Motivated
- Passionate

Barriers to Volunteering

- Caring Responsibilities/Time Availability
- Lack of Training/Support
- Employment
- Lack of Skills

- Having own Agenda
- Lack of Finance
- Transport
- Lack of Confidence
- Lack of Information

What Motivation is needed to Volunteer?

- Want to give back
- Want to help others in same positions as myself
- Improving my community
- Utilize my experience/skills
- Looking for opportunities
- Knowing I can make a difference

The event proved to be a huge success with all participants commenting on the relevance of the information that was provided and the usefulness of having the opportunity to discuss the different ways in which they could get involved. It was very clear from the feedback provided that individual participants want to volunteer in different ways and would like more guidance and support on how they could do this effectively. Participants discussed honestly the range of skills and abilities that they possess and how this might be of use to the organisation. It was most evident that all participants highlighted the need for training, to know what was expected of them and more importantly to feel confident enough to perform the duties to good effect.

Next Steps/Considerations

As mentioned at the start of this report the Volunteer Development Session is the beginning of a process for Staff/Directors of North Lanarkshire Carers Together in relation to the extension of volunteer involvement in our work. We are well aware of the long standing valuable contribution that volunteers have made to the work of the organisation and the influence they have had in terms of its success. We are also acutely aware that as we move to the Integration of Health and Social Work Services and the formation of newly established structures of the need to develop our volunteer capacity in order to maximise effective representation in the new structures.

As an organisation we will move quickly to capitalize on the success of the Volunteer Development Session by ensuring that carers who expressed an interest in volunteering opportunities are invited back to take part in a more formal and structured session. As an organisation we will need to consider how we effectively manage the use of volunteers in the work that we are involved in, consider the development of a Volunteering Strategy which incorporates an effective induction process that is able to identify appropriate training and support needs of potential volunteers.

Sean Harkin

Carer Development Officer

May 2015