



## ***HUNTS FORUM OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS***

### ***SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE***

#### **Background**

Huntingdonshire is a large district with approximately 166,000 people, its towns, villages and countryside offer diverse and attractive environments in which to live and work. It also benefits from an active voluntary sector with 1200 groups working on behalf of local residents.

Huntingdonshire Sustainable Community Strategy sets out a shared vision for Huntingdonshire for 2008 – 2028. Sustainable communities are places where people want to live work and spend time, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, and provide a good quality of life. The voluntary and community sector is a key provider of services that ensure a good quality of life.

#### **People at the heart of what we do**

The organisations potentially affected by the Draft Budget provide front line services to the vulnerable and marginalised within our society.

Despite over fifteen years of legislation, vulnerable people still face barriers in society, which prevent them from having equal access to many of the opportunities that exist in everyday life. Inequality still exists in education, employment, levels of income and access to services.

Voluntary organisations recognise that only by working together can we build strong, prosperous, vibrant and sustainable communities. Voluntary and community organisations have worked and will continue to work with Huntingdonshire District Council and other public sector partners to support the vulnerable in our society and reduce costs where and when it can.

The support we receive from Huntingdonshire District Council enables us to provide services to those most in need. Attached are some care studies and examples to show the impact on individuals, organisations and communities in Huntingdonshire.

Julie Farrow  
Chief Executive  
Hunts Forum  
[www.huntsforum.org.uk](http://www.huntsforum.org.uk)

## Case studies to show impact on individuals, organisations and communities

### Huntingdon Volunteer Centre

(Huntingdon)

#### 1. Roger

Roger came to us looking for a volunteering role to fill up his time: we found a placement which utilised his gifts at the Papworth Trust Centre for people with disabilities.

#### Feedback from Monika – Pathways to Work administrator

I thought you would like an update on Roger. He has been absolutely brilliant with the Papworth Trust Centre. He used to volunteer a couple of days a week and helped with the music, song writing, and drama as well as with the Grand Challenge charity fundraising project.

#### Feedback from Roger

Thanks to Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre: it was at their suggestion that I approached the Papworth Trust – a year ago now. Whilst working with the disabled was not something I had considered (when I first contemplated volunteering) I soon realised how rewarding the experience was, in fact, so much so that a year after volunteering I have now joined the Trust as an ‘on the books’ employee. The volunteering I did with the Trust through HVC made me realise how worthwhile it is as an activity, let alone the valuable addition it is to your CV in these difficult times. Volunteering opened a new door on a new career for me. Roger

The impact that volunteering had on Roger’s life is clear to see. He gained experience and developed an interest in working with the disabled, as well as finding the work rewarding. He then went on to gain paid employment directly through this volunteering activity. The impact on the Papworth Trust was also obvious as he gave his skills and time freely for over a year, which will have supported the staff and improved the quality of life for the service users.

#### 2. Huntingdonshire Society for the Blind

The Huntingdonshire Society for the Blind is an independent charity which supports hundreds of people with sight impairment by running social clubs and outings, organising home visits, providing advice and aids like tapes and Braille services. It depends entirely on donations and fundraising to sustain its services. The society has over one hundred volunteers, over half of which have been placed via the Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre.

The impact that this organisation has on the lives of those people with sight impairment is immeasurable. It clearly relies on volunteers to help provide its services and to raise the necessary funds. These services would be halved if the Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre did not refer volunteers to them.

#### 3. Jill

*“Last night I sat thinking and was unsure of coming to the Volunteer Centre. I was thinking maybe there would be nothing suitable for me or I wouldn’t fit in, but I am glad I came as Sandra was very welcoming and easy to get along with. She soon put me at ease and quickly tuned into the sort of person I am and came up with things that really suited me as a person and my personality and*

*hopefully if I am accepted by Hospice at Home there will be a lot of satisfaction in the work and that's what is important to me."*

### **Feedback from Hospice at Home**

*"What a lovely lady you have sent us - she has just completed her training with us and is going to visit her first client next week. Thanks a million."*

This is a very special volunteer opportunity as volunteers have to have empathy with the recipient and the family, maintaining an understanding nature of the situation at a difficult time for them.

(St Neots)

- 1) Alex (aged 17) came to the Centre via Connections wanting to use his time fruitfully before starting college and to learn new skills. He was interested in the Young Lives opportunities as well as helping in the Conservation Projects run by HDC at Sudbury Meadow. We set up interviews for him with both organisations. He called into the office the next day to tell us how well it had all gone and how good he felt about the interviews.

- 2) *I am writing following our meeting which took place on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July. I requested the meeting because I am currently working with a client who is very interested in doing some voluntary work and I have exhausted all of my avenues and therefore require further expert assistance.*

*Both my client and I found the meeting very useful and informative. The informal setting was appropriate to my client as he suffers from anxiety and would not have dealt well with a formal process. You assisted us to address options which we had not considered and also made contact with a local Nursing Home which has proved very productive indeed. Since our meeting we have been to meet the Manager and are in the process of confirming regular dates and times for him to tend their extensive gardens. The role is ideal for him and he is very much looking forward to starting once we have ironed out a few issues concerning transporting his equipment to and from which is all in hand.*

*I would like to thank you for your assistance with this matter and very much look forward to working with you again if a similar situation should arise.*

Tenancy Support Worker – Luminus Group

(St Ives)

- 1) **January 2010:** On my way down to the coffee shop from the office I saw a man looking at the Volunteering Notice board. I went over to him and asked if he was interested in volunteering. He said that he was curious and wished to find out more about volunteering. He was at a bit of a loss because he had to retire from an extremely busy job because of failing eye sight. He was having to reassess what he would do with his life and felt that he needed to find a way of 'being useful'. We immediately made an appointment (14 January 2010) and after discussing many volunteering options he decided that he would like to become an Age UK visitor.

**21 July 2010:** Paul came in to tell me that he had been matched with a wonderful gentleman who is a retired engine driver. He and Paul share an interest in trains and they can talk for hours. Paul explained this experience has been beneficial for his own life too and he really looks forward to the weekly visits. He was impressed that Age Concern managed to match him so well with a client and he would recommend this experience to anyone! His enthusiasm was just wonderful to see and a real encouragement to us all.

- 2) Jane came to the volunteer centre after a referral from her doctor because she was suffering from depression. She started helping in the office answering the phone and sorting out drives for a social car-scheme. Her confidence has grown so much while working in the office, that she is now off all medication and has been on a number of free training courses that the volunteer centre has arranged for her i.e. how to fill in job application forms, doing a new CV and computer courses.

(Ramsey)

- 1) J works for us as an office volunteer and has now become a "stand by helper" as she has found part time employment. She came to us last year having very recently lost her sister from Cancer. During our Christmas Coffee Morning she came over and said to me that the volunteering work and the new friends she had made whilst working with us had helped her through an extremely difficult time and she did not know how she would have coped without us.

### **Case studies to show how we help vulnerable people**

One of our Ramsey drivers has received a lovely thank you card from one of his passengers who is in her early thirties and has been receiving treatment for eyesight problems at Addenbrookes. She said she does not know what she would have done without the help of the Volunteer car scheme as her appointments were early morning and she praised Cavan for his help, care and support at a very stressful time in her life.

A St Neots client has been using our transport to take her to the surgery since 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008. She wrote in 2010 to say that her ulcers are now better and she no longer needs our transport. She expressed her thanks for all the help and support she had received from both the drivers and the office helpers.

A young St Ives volunteer, who suffers from social anxiety disorder, was extremely pleased that, with some assistance, he was able to volunteer for two hours with Operation Christmas Child in November. He was delighted that he was able to do this and felt it was a significant step forward on his road to recovery.

A new Huntingdon client is picked up every Saturday as well as once in the week from Hunters Down after visiting her husband and taken home to Sawtry. She is so grateful that she doesn't have to be a burden to anyone asking for transport so often.

Our Ramsey office had several phone calls from car scheme users who have been using us for hospital appointments. They all praised the drivers for their kindness and said that they do not know how they would have managed without us.

### **Huntingdon Shop Mobility**

Offering a service that loans wheelchairs or motorised scooters to members of the public who are mobility impaired either permanent or temporarily so they can access the shops in and around Huntingdon. Also provides over night hire and attends special events i.e. Wood Green, Heritage weekend and Christmas lights turn on.

## Natural High

Natural High's 'Changing Places' transition project (St Neots) aimed to enable vulnerable year 6 pupils to make a successful transition from primary school to secondary school. The project provided specific support to pupils over the summer holidays and during the first year at secondary school. Thirty-seven young people were identified and referred onto the project. All the young people said that they were happier about starting school through being on the project. Feedback from parents has also been very positive:

**‘She seems more confident to talk to other children and try to make new friends.’**

**“He is very keen to start school, has become more confident about attempting tasks, which he would have found difficult, generally he is less moody and much more talkative with us, his parents.”**

Changing Places is a rolling programme so the young people that attended are then trained as Young Leaders to work with the next new intake at their school.

## St Barnabas Learning Centre

The Learning Centre and Church provide training and self development in the heart of Oxmoor. Working closely with partners to provide a variety of courses ‘free to the learner’ and open access to computers for members of the local community.

Courses are available to support parents and children from Ready Steady Lunch to ensure parents understand about food and nutrition to Post Natal Support for new mums. An increasing need is the support required by migrant workers. The demand for this type of work has caused us to seek additional funding for a part-time Migrant Family Support Worker.

## Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations

Providing support services to individual and voluntary and community groups across Huntingdonshire. Managing on behalf of HDC the Maple Centre a hub of voluntary activity in the heart of Oxmoor.

G came to volunteer at Hunts Forum twelve months ago, unemployed for some considerable time due to mental health problems. G quickly became a member of the admin team and tried a variety of tasks, updating her skills on the way and attending the free courses identified by Hunts Forum as part of her development plan.

G has now been offered a job and her last day of volunteering at Hunts Forum was 7<sup>th</sup> January 2011. *‘I wanted to thank you for all your help over the last year and for the opportunity to work at Hunts Forum. I have enjoyed it a lot and hope I have been of some help; I loved getting to know the staff and really like them all. Your support helped me get my new job and I am looking forward to the new challenge’*

## Comments from voluntary organisations after receiving support from Hunts Forum

CARESCO – Sawtry and district Care and Resource Organisation

*‘Your encouragement and enthusiasm has given us all hope when facing the daunting task of changing our organisation’s status and entering into a contract with the County Council. It is*

*reassuring to know that other organisations have gone before us and have managed to get through the process and survived! Many thanks, Liz Coates*

St John's Little Learners – pre-school nursery

*'Thank you for the advice and support given to the management team – we were able to deal with the issues raised and have a positive outcome' Julie Grinstead*

Fenstanton Village Hall

*'We very much appreciate the advice and support provided by Hunts Forum in setting up policies to guide our operations. Many thanks, Jane Blunt*