



## **Speech and Interviews by Harriet Eadie, Director, Volunteer Centre Edinburgh.**

*The following is a summary of Harriet Eadie's speech with highlights from interviews with volunteers that Harriet conducted during her speech.*

Passion. I want to talk about passion; but I need to talk about process.

Volunteering happens because people are passionate, interested, and enthused to make a change. Individual motivations may be about campaigning, learning, helping, changing things, improving health, getting a job. But people don't work for nothing without passion.

But alongside passion there needs to be process. The process that lets people act on their passions and volunteer how, when, where and with whom they want. The process that makes every volunteer experience a good experience. And the process that lets people who have never thought they could or would volunteer get involved. The Inspiring Volunteering Strategy is this process.

My task today is to talk about the Inspiring Volunteering Strategy – what it has achieved – where it still has to go. The Strategy was launched two years ago in December 2006. It had a clear set of goals and an extensive action plan.

Over the summer we carried out several online surveys – of volunteer engaging organisations; volunteers and referral agencies. As we had responses from 200 organisations I guess many of you may have completed one. Amongst many things we asked – do you know about the Volunteering Strategy? An encouraging 60% of you said "Yes". We then asked – do you know what it is about and what it has achieved. A rather less encouraging 90% of you said "No".

I am not going to talk in detail about 8 page action plan – and the progress towards it. You have in your packs a progress report on the Strategy. Detailed data from these surveys will also be on the Volunteer Centre website if you want to know more.

The real evidence of a strategy's success is the difference it makes on the ground. Three different groups will share with us today their experiences of volunteering and demonstrate some of the differences the Volunteering Strategy has made in the past two years.

The Volunteer Strategy has 2 key themes:

- to engage people in volunteering, and;
- to improve the volunteering experience

It has a third theme too... To ensure volunteering is properly resourced...

So lets reflect on what the strategy has achieved -

In our strategy the first objective we described, under the theme of engaging people in volunteering, was 'closing the opportunity gap'. This reflects the Strategy's ambition for inclusion in Volunteering.

Statistics still show more volunteering in affluent areas than less affluent. Services for Communities Neighbourhood Statistics of February this year asked people if they had given unpaid help to any groups clubs or organisations in the past year. The Meadows/Morningside area – traditionally affluent – has the highest rate of volunteering at 37% while Forth, generally much poorer, has a rate of 22%. But as ever statistics tell only half the story – one group in Forth is a real leader in volunteering involvement.

Prop Stress Centre is a community lead mental health project in Pilton. Following a review of the organisation in 2004 Prop made the decision to develop volunteering within the project in order to be able to develop and expand services – and just as importantly to engage the skills and experience of the project users in running the project and helping to deliver those services themselves.

Recognising that good volunteering does not happen by itself they took the decision to appoint a volunteers' manager. As a small community project - funding for this seemed unfeasible on their own so they took the sensible decision to work with another local project – Pilton Community Health Project – to raise funds for a volunteer manager working across both projects.

This year both Prop Stress Centre and Pilton Community Health Project received the Investors in Volunteering Award. IIV is the hard won quality standard for excellence in volunteers management.

Harriet then spoke to *Nikki Cummings is Chair of the Board at Prop.*

*Nikki spoke of benefits of volunteering. Pride, in her achievements, receiving two awards in 2007 for her volunteering, including one at the Scottish Parliament. Her children view her volunteering as "working" and therefore setting a good example and encourage her children to have a work ethic and improvements in her personal well being and improved mental health. Also because of Prop she began to volunteer in other organisation. Nikki's best reward is being able to encourage others to volunteer.*

Harriet then spoke to Penny Richardson, Manager of Prop Stress Centre.

*Penny spoke of the ways in which Prop involves volunteers including their Board of Directors - 50 percent of board must be members of community or people who have used the facility. There are also a wide range of other volunteering opportunities including gardener – drop in volunteers – human signpost. Penny spoke of the benefits of having a volunteer manager has meant a better system of management over the last couple of years. It means that the volunteering has become more professional. Volunteers are more supported and not overworked or exploited. The volunteer manager system in Prop has developed an interesting model. The volunteer manager is shared between two agencies. IIV (Investing in Volunteers) allowed them to showcase what is being done well in the project and is a huge boost for volunteers as well as ways to improve the service. Prop is very grateful for the bursary from City of Edinburgh Council to help meet the cost of IIV.*

*Penny spoke of concerns around the future of Who is going to sustain volunteering and how? Not only for our organisations but for all our citizens.*

Nikki and Penny's story touches on many of the successes of the volunteering strategy.

Let's have a look at some of the developments of the volunteering strategy towards making Volunteering more equal.

The first thing we wanted to do was make support and encouragement available for people to volunteer in less affluent areas.

One of the things that was a major prompt of the volunteering strategy in the first place was the increasing numbers of people getting involved in volunteering who face multiple challenging issues in their lives. I talked at the beginning about people's passion to volunteer. But for many people the passion is actually more of a need – just to do something. People with mental health problems or disabilities, people with histories of offending, people who would dearly like paid employment but have never worked. People for whom English is not a native language. People coping with addictions. For many people volunteering is a really important way just to do something useful, and be part of something.

In our survey of agencies we found that 68% of organisations engaged some volunteers with additional needs – with 14% of orgs having more than 25% of all their volunteers with additional needs. This is a significant increase from the same survey in 2006. Volunteer Centre Edinburgh's own experience is similar. This year 370 individuals came to our health and Well being and employability teams for advice. And this was not volunteers looking for opportunities but support workers; guidance workers; employability workers, health and social care professionals – all looking for support and advice to help their clients into volunteering.

This is great – in terms of inclusion and participation – and it provides an enormous and extremely cost effective benefit to individuals.

Lets talk briefly about the economics of volunteering

From a public purse point of view – with an absolutely unapologetic direction of this point to Mr Swinney – volunteering is a highly cost effective means of helping people overcome multiple barriers. Our research shows people visit their GPs less; reduce their dependence on prescribed medication and drink less when volunteering. Over the longer term volunteering is also for many an effective pathway into paid employment.

I don't want to suggest for one minute that volunteering is a wonder drug. It absolutely is not. The very large proportion of supported volunteering takes place in the Voluntary sector rather than the public sector – though in areas with a dedicated volunteers manager in place – NHS and City of Edinburgh Council Health and Social Care – great strides have been taken to try and enable participation by volunteers with greater needs. The increase in Volunteers Managers is almost certainly related to the much greater demand for volunteering placements by people with higher support needs.

Volunteer manager posts are frequently funded through trusts and charitable funds. Biglottery; Voluntary Action Fund; Lloyds TSB etc. And until recently through the Fairer Scotland Fund. Cost effective certainly – but absolutely not cost free. One huge concern for the Volunteer strategy looking ahead is because most of this vital social provision lies outside of the public sector it is much less well costed and quantified than it might be. Small voluntary sector agencies are extremely effective at measuring the outcomes of their work directly and reporting directly to often multiple individual funders – but it is much harder than with public sector reporting processes to aggregate this information to provide a proper cost benefit analysis of volunteering. And without this analysis this support is much much more

vulnerable to the inevitable drop in income from all these sources that will accompany the economic down turn.

One of the key action points towards supporting was the development of Volunteering hubs across the city.

There are two main outcomes we want to achieve by local hubs – North south east west – funded through ESF/Biglottery/One City Trust

- 1 Support and signposting into volunteering for people who wouldn't otherwise do it
- 2 Increasing employability through volunteering (+ mentoring service)

The other hub is at the Royal Ed – support to patients in and out of the hospital

Lets move on to a different set of outcomes for the strategy

Older people and volunteering –

There are very large numbers of older people volunteering – 31% of 60 to 64 year olds volunteer in Edinburgh – in all sorts of different areas – and while much focus of recent national volunteering strategies has been on young people – older people are offering a huge amount.

Let me introduce you to a wonderful example of intergenerational volunteering – and a really good public/voluntary sector partnership. CSV RSVP is a project that works with older volunteers. RSVP currently has 343 school volunteers in Scotland with 26 in Edinburgh.

Harriet then went on to speak with Liz Parnell and Jo Mulvagh.

*Liz Parnell spoke of how post retirement she decided to wanted to do something and wanted to work with people. Through RSVP she started working with Balgreen Primary School and goes in every Tuesday and generally helps out children with maths, spelling, reading etc. She enjoys all aspects of it. It gives her satisfaction and pleasure. She is able to do lots of things she perhaps would not otherwise do. Museum visits, shows etc.*

*Jo Mulvagh, Balgreen Primary School (Teacher) with whom Liz works spoke of the benefits to her of having a volunteer such as Liz are that, apart from extra practical help she provides, she brings a wealth of experience. Someone from outside creates another dimension. She is calm and positive and respectful of children. It means there is another trusted adult in the classroom. The children have a positive relationship with someone of another generation. Jo spoke of how if Liz did not volunteer with her there would be a loss of that extra dimension and interaction. The children also know that Liz volunteers and does not get paid and she is an excellent role model within the framework of a Curriculum for Excellence in its aims such as producing “responsible citizens”.*

I'm going to rattle through some of these next successes of the strategy. Just to remind you that you will find more information on each of these areas in your Action Plan update in your packs.

Reward and recognition is vital. A new annual 'Inspiring Volunteering Awards' for Volunteering is established to take place during Volunteers Week. 232 Inspiring Volunteering Awards were delivered at a series of 5 award ceremonies. 4 neighbourhood events hosted by local MSPs in Scottish Parliament. A citywide event was hosted by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh at the Council's Lothian Chambers. This event drew nominations from across the

city for individuals and groups of volunteers for the categories of Innovation, Impact, Commitment and Partnership.

Nikki and Penny talked about the Investing in Volunteers Awards. The Investing in Volunteers subsidy award, funded by the City of Edinburgh Council, provides financial help to meet the cost of IIV. To date 24 organisations have taken advantage of the subsidy and a further 6 are currently investigating the possibility. Edinburgh now has the highest proportion of IIV achieving organisations in Scotland. Of the 39 organisations in Scotland who've achieved IIV, 25 are Edinburgh based.

A key action point of the strategy was that public agencies and departments should put in place a framework for involving volunteers. Considerable achievements have been made in this area. The City of Edinburgh Council established an internal working group across departments and committed to pilot the Investing in Volunteers quality standard within the Health and Social Care Department. The City of Edinburgh Council updated and re-circulated its Volunteering Policy across departments to re-engage and familiarise staff with it. NHS Lothian's Framework for Volunteering is currently being implemented and NHS Lothian are also aiming for Investing in Volunteers (IiV) status in 2010. Lothian and Borders Police have established a Volunteer Programme within the Force and developed a Volunteering Policy.

Youth volunteering is a huge area of growth with masses of potential. EKE out undertook a survey of members and more than half said that they had developed new projects involving young volunteers. Volunteer Centre Edinburgh has a new youth peer education project where young people are promoting volunteering opportunities to their peers in schools across the city.

One of the final challenges of the strategy was to increase the numbers of volunteering opportunities to meet the aspirations of the increased number of volunteers. In the past two years numbers of new opportunities registered with the Volunteer centre have grown from 400 in 04 to 06 to 600 in 06 to 08.

But the most valuable of new opportunities are developed directly by and for volunteers who see a direct need and take action to meet that need. Keith Dryburgh and Agnes Gryzbek have done just that through the Roars not Whispers Initiative. Roars Not Whispers is a youth leaders initiative run as a partnership between Oxfam and the Scottish Youth Parliament. It works with 16 to 25 year olds to help them develop and act on their own ideas for change.

*Keith spoke of how he already worked in the sector for Citizens Advice Scotland and through that had met volunteers and decided to volunteer himself. He went to the Volunteer Centre to look for opportunities. Through that visit he found out about the Roars Not Whispers project and within only 10 days of visiting the Centre he found himself on a residential training weekend learning how to become a peer leader. This led onto the development of Clanski. Keith recognised that there was a large influx of new young immigrants from Eastern Europe, particularly Poland and he wanted to work with them to help break down barriers between young Scottish people and young immigrants. He wanted to try and bring people together promote better understanding. Clanski were celebrating their first major event which was a evening of classic Polish comedy cinema.*

*Agnes, from Clanski spoke of how most young Polish people had come for economic reasons. This project helps people realise what possibilities exist to get involved in projects in Edinburgh. It provides an opportunity to meet other people in Edinburgh and she now feel that she not only has to be in Edinburgh, but wants to be here.*

And finally – there are many challenges ahead for Volunteering – and we will have time to discuss these with our panel shortly. Some of the biggest issues are the economic downturn and public sector efficiency drives. Moves to contracting and tendering of public services are a potential threat to small organisations and involvement of volunteers. There is a huge challenge in how to support and develop informal volunteering.

But in whatever we do – and whatever the external challenges – our challenge with the next phase of the Volunteer strategy is to keep on trying to let the passion for people to volunteer – wherever – however and with who ever - flourish and grow.