

## **Summary for councillors:**

### **Who:**

Catherine (Catt) Burland is the project officer funded by Arts Council England under the Volunteer Futures Project which consists of nineteen projects nationally. The project officer is managed by the Library and Archive service although works across cultural services internally and externally.

The project seeks to work with those who have barriers to accessing volunteering and opportunities, some of these groups include but are not limited to:

- Children and young people
- Housebound participants
- Individuals with mental health needs
- Those with physical and learning disabilities
- The homeless and displaced (including asylum seekers and refugees)
- Those who experience loneliness.

### **What:**

The project aims to address barriers to volunteering with consultation, strategy, practical support and application of new methods including those shared nationally and within the remit of the breadth of the council. By the end of the first year, a best practice guide outlining suggestions and findings will be shared not only with Portsmouth City Council, but organisations in the county inclusive of Gosport Voluntary Action, One Community Hampshire, and the University of Portsmouth.

### **Why:**

To share and learn best practice with regards to volunteering opportunities as part of a COVID-19 recovery for cultural services.

### **Where:**

The project supports volunteers and organisations between PO1-PO6 and has designated target areas for activity as designated by the bid. The overall volunteer numbers are designated to be 500 volunteers within two years, the current engagement stands at approximately 150 although this is across around twenty roles with some volunteers undertaking more than one role.

### **When:**

The project runs from July 2022- July 2024 and the bid was initially written by the previous Library and Archive Service Manager, Lindy Elliott, with support from a number of other Cultural services including museums, internal and external community centres, specialist disability employment support service Youtrust, and adult social care. These services and a number of other representatives inclusive of parks, educational establishments, children's social care, the specialist volunteer bureau HIVE, Shaping Portsmouth, and others- all sit on the steering group, with the bid indicating the steering group will become 50% volunteers at the end of the first year.

At present the project has been involved in the following events:

Victorious Festival                      Bookfest                      Moving Forward                      Carers Count  
Party for Hilsea                      Party for Somerstown                      Party for Cosham  
Summer Reading Challenge                      SLS Portsmouth Reads                      LD Awareness Training Days  
Celebration of Libraries Volunteers

The project is seeking to either host or engage with the due events:

Wilder Day Paulsgrove April                      Wilder Day Paulsgrove Autumn  
Empower! Paulsgrove (a series of cultural activity events free at point of access for residents)  
Carers Week                      Volunteers Week

The project has been involved in the following groups:

Portsmouth Learning Disability Partnership Board                      Abilities for Life social group  
Craft Club at Central library (new)                      The Detectives (ACDC project)  
Photography club with Aspex Gallery due to be continued by the project  
Board Game club (due, at Cosham Library)

The project has placed volunteers in or signposted to the following organisations:

Libraries services (inclusive of Data Entry, Marketing, Multi-lingual book reviews, Duke Of Edinburgh, Visually Impaired Services, Bookfest, translation of PCC VCSE documents)  
Portsmouth Healthy Walks                      The Detectives (ACDC project)                      Shopmobility  
Abilities for Life                      Solent Volunteer Trainers                      Youtrust AND Services

The project holds vacancies for organisations such as:

Community Connectors                      The Mobile Library                      Community Centres  
Solent Stormers                      NMRN                      Victoria Park

And many others.

The project attends regularly at internal and external promotional and recruitment events such as those hosted by the University of Portsmouth and the DWP Job Centre fayres.

## Project Impact:

1. Abilities for Life- a social group which is peer led and organisationally supported- has around fifteen regular attendees from Portsmouth and the surrounding area.  
After identifying a lack of provision in the north of the city, a young lady with physical and learning disabilities has been supported to create a new social group to meet the need. The project has supported with the project officer providing ideas, guidance, a venue, time, and DBS checks for the 6 volunteers who are seeking to support the group for themselves following training from the project officer. Some of the attendees to the group had been referred by their GP's after spending several years isolated from their communities and spending time in their bedrooms with nothing to do.
2. A young man was referred to the project from Room 1 Neurodivergent and Autism services. He was attending other provision although did not find it appropriate for him. After a period of time attending as a volunteer at the library and being supported by the library team and project officer, the individual found themselves ostracised from what little support they had. Having gained a more stable home placement (instead of being of no fixed address) the individual carved out a degree of routine as a library volunteer and was supported with their mental health needs and self-harm. The individual is now receiving employment support and is hoping to gain employment- and has described the opportunities provided to them by the project as a lifeline.
3. A gentleman who was referred from Youtrust employment support service for individuals with disabilities. Prior to volunteering, the individual identified as having no purpose and being lonely. They partook in the six-week micro-volunteering opportunity and were supported with their interests. They also have provided valuable insight as to how best to engage volunteers and provide accessible training. They left the project having found a paid role supporting others by training professionals on learning disabilities, having gained confidence and self-belief in themselves.
4. The project has supported six Duke of Edinburgh students on a weekly basis so far (with more due to join shortly) utilising the six-week micro-volunteering programme. The young people are provided with a crash course in volunteering for Portsmouth City Council and the library service (inclusive of a shortened and concise version of mandatory training) and most go onto volunteer independently with the library service, inclusive of peer support and encouraging other young people. Some of the young people who have been engaged have limited school engagement, autism, and learning difficulties.