

**St. Martin's Volunteer Project
Evaluation Report
October 2012**

Appendices

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Appendix One - Volunteer Personal Stories

Barbara

Barbara left her job in 2005 and since then has been a “mam”. She’s been a volunteer at the centre for about 18 months. She supports the Parents and Toddlers and the Follow My Lead groups. She’s been involved in: planning and evaluating sessions; setting up and clearing up; playing with the children; sharing ideas with parents. Occasionally she has supported other volunteers.

Barbara was a centre user but learned about volunteer opportunities via the internet. Her main reason for volunteering was to improve her skills and her chances of getting back into paid work. She feels volunteering at the centre has more than met her expectations. It has provided the experience she was looking for and she has taken part in numerous training opportunities provided by the centre. She has gained a Level 2 qualification in working with children. In addition, Barbara has made new friends and feels her confidence has been given a boost. She’s shared experiences of bringing up children and now has more understanding of how to encourage her own children to develop.

Barbara feels really well supported by the centre. In particular it has made her think about how she might progress in the future. She thinks her experience at the centre will “open doors” for her. It’s helped her realise that she could go back to college. She’s doing as much training as she can now at the centre, but once her children are a little older, she’d like to do an HEFC at college in sociology or psychology. In the meantime, she thinks a mentoring scheme, where experienced volunteers support newer volunteers would be a good idea. It would develop the skills of both the mentor and the new volunteer. Because she has young children, being able to access work experience and training on her doorstep is really important to Barbara.

Barbara believes strongly that volunteers make a “huge” difference to the centre:

- Lots more activities take place such as parent and toddlers, coffee mornings, pub quiz night, soup and stottie.
- It brings users in: volunteers spread the word and bring their neighbours/friends.
- Volunteers bring additional ideas and perspectives

A final word from Barbara:

“I probably would have gone back to work, but might have ended up in a job I hated. I’m hoping that volunteering at the centre will help me get a job that I want to do.”

Wendy

Wendy lives in Walker and was a carer for her mother who was a big part of her life. After her mum died, Wendy stayed in the house most of the time and was “getting fed up”. She decided to think about volunteering, partly for something to do, but also to meet people and make new friends – and maybe to improve her skills. She found out about volunteer opportunities at St. Martin’s from the Newcastle Volunteer Centre.

Wendy has been a volunteer at the centre for about a year. She helps out at the Community Lunch, Tea Club and the Pub Quiz Night. She prepares and serves food and light refreshments. At the quiz night she also takes the money, hands out questions and tidies up afterwards.

Volunteering has made a big difference to Wendy’s life. She feels it has met her expectations by giving her the opportunity to do something constructive and meet people. In addition, she lost confidence after her mum died, but volunteering at the centre has helped her feel a lot more confident. She “gets out more”, feels healthier and enjoys meeting new people all the time. She’s developed her knowledge and skills, not only through experience, but also by taking part in training. She’s taken part in “away day” training for volunteers and has certificates in Food Hygiene and Health and Safety. She gets on well with other volunteers and thinks volunteers make a big contribution to the centre: “Without volunteers, half the things would not run”.

Wendy feels well supported by the staff: “they are really helpful and always there”. However, she has some ideas and how it could improve:

- Communication could be better – too much reliance on email
- Opportunities to meet other volunteers informally
- One to one supervision

Looking to the future, Wendy is content to volunteer at the centre and is not seeking to move on elsewhere. She values being able to volunteer somewhere locally. She has expressed interest in other local volunteering opportunities such as helping schoolchildren with their reading but is waiting to hear back.

Final comments from Wendy

“The quiz is really good fun and you get to meet a lot of people”

“If this had not come along, I would have been more and more depressed”

Dianne – *written by herself*

Just a few words to explain how I think being a volunteer with you and the staff at St Martin's Centre has help me over the past year. I walked in to St. Martins Centre over a year ago at the beginning of June. I was met at the desk and put in touch with you. I was a bundle of nerves and you immediately put me at my ease. I signed up to become one of you volunteers with a mind to do maybe some reception work and also work with children.

I have had experience of office work but it had been 18 years since I last worked in that field. Over the years I had done voluntary work in my daughter's primary school and had always loved it so I had a little experience working with children. Once my CRB check came through it was all systems go and from day one all the centre's staff made me feel very welcome and my confidence soared. Our induction training was fab and I went on to volunteer in everything I could from playgroups, soup and stottie to the youth club. In January this year I even become a volunteer coordinator where I help start a Parent and Toddler group from scratch where I learnt minute taking and what and how to organize the paper work involved from registration forms to signing in sheets.

Being a volunteer at the Centre also meant that I was put forward for lots of courses and it made me realise that even I could take new things in and learn. With this in mind I signed up to level 2 courses, to work within the childcare sector and to work as a Learning Support Assistant in a Primary School. While I was doing my courses I was lucky enough to land a paid job at the centre in the role of After School Club Assistant which I had been a volunteer in for a time. Had I not been a volunteer and had the experience to do the job I would never had the confidence to apply for the position. I loved being a volunteer and feel I have benefited greatly form my time there. I grew in confidence which help me go on to volunteer in different roles in schools. I was taken on as a supply LSA and have just been through the interview process and landed a job as a LSA with special needs children full time in September at a local Primary School. I do believe I would not have done any of this had it not been for the help and support I got while I was a volunteer at St Martin's Centre form the coordinator and the rest of the staff at the centre. I would recommend this to anyone even if it's just to while away a couple of hours a week. It leaves you with a sense of self worth and pride in yourself.

So a BIG thank you to the volunteer coordinator and the staff xxx

Isaac

Isaac is a full time carer for his mother. Before being a carer, he was a school cook and later supported partially sighted people, both as a paid worker and as a volunteer. He's been involved in St. Martin's church as a volunteer for many years. He used to run the Sunday School and ran the Boys Brigade for many years. About six months ago he responded to a request to help run the coffee mornings and possibly an over-50's club.

Isaac's main reason for being a volunteer is to give something to the local community. Isaac "hates sitting doing nothing". He wants to do things and get out of the house. Being a volunteer at the centre is important to Isaac because not only does it give him something to do, but also he's been able to meet people and make new friends. He's taken part in training provided by the centre. Because he is a carer for his mother, at the moment he's not looking to progress onto other things. He's content to volunteer at the centre and the church.

Isaac does not feel the need for a lot of support, but says that advice and support is always there whenever he does needs it.

Final comment from Isaac:

"I get a lot of satisfaction from helping others"

Sue

Sue started as a volunteer in June, 2011. Initially as an opportunity to meet new people, but also to support her daughter who started volunteering at the same time. Sue offered to volunteer as a gardener in the centre and she has since gone onto varied roles around St. Martin's Centre, such as helping out and planning the new coffee morning, supporting childcare groups and taking part in the monthly over 55s 'Soup and Stottie' event.

Sue freely admits that she regards St. Martin's as her "second home" and has enjoyed her experiences here. She is a valued member of the volunteering team and has taken on a new lease of life. Sue lacked self-esteem and confidence after being made redundant in her former job and was eager to gain employment. She completed accredited training in Level 2 Working with Children, Level 2 Health and Safety, and Drugs Awareness. She used her volunteer experience and training to brush up her skills and designed a new CV with support from the Volunteer Coordinator.

Recently Sue gained full time employment with a social care company providing support to vulnerable older adults. Sue is a keen supporter of volunteering and says she is remarkably different from the person who started at the centre. Her life priorities have changed with a focus on her own career goals and personal fulfillment.

Appendix Two - Summary of Volunteers Survey Results

A survey of volunteers was carried out during July and August 2012. This is a summary of the answers. 20 surveys were completed.

Headlines

- Volunteers make a big difference to the centre. They run and support a lot of activities.
- The main reason for volunteering is to help others, give something to the community
- Volunteers also benefit. They gain confidence, learn new skills, make friends, and get experience which will help them in the future e.g. to get a job.
- Volunteers feel well supported by the centre. They appreciate the training and the advice/support from staff.
- Volunteers think a couple of things could be better. They would like more opportunities to meet each other informally. Mostly they feel well informed, but communication could improve a little.

Activities supported by volunteers in this survey

Follow My Lead	15%	Follow My Little Lead	10%
Parent and Toddlers	35%	Coffee Mornings	25%
Events e.g. fayres	35%	Pub Quiz Night	55%
Youth Club	35%	Reception	10%
Community Lunch	45%	Gardening	10%
Marketing/advertising	5%	Other	10%

Reasons for becoming a volunteer

Reason	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%
Meet people/make friends						
Something to do						
Give something to the community/other people						
Build my confidence						
Improve skills/get training						
Improve my chance of getting a job - work experience						
Improve my chance of undertaking further education/training						

Volunteers were asked to rate their experience of the Centre on a scale from 1 to 5

Volunteer experience	1	2	3	4	5
Expectations met					
Difference made to volunteer					
Support from volunteer co-ordinator					
Support from other staff					
Support to look for other opportunities					
Benefit to centre from volunteers					

St. Martin's Volunteers Survey

Volunteers Comments

Expectations met?

I have volunteered previously and the staff and facilities always meet my expectations.

I've been offered more training than expected....All the training on offer and relationships with other volunteers.....Everyone is really helpful and friendly.

It has helped me to build up my confidence when talking to other people I did not know.

Great place to volunteer, such lovely people, great great time....The help and support I received was excellent....It's not as time consuming as I thought it would be.

Because all the staff are very friendly and the other volunteers are also.

Had no expectations, didn't know what to expect....It's a good place.

I haven't had enough spare time to help out as much as I would have liked.

Difference made to you

Gives me knowledge and experience in all aspects of life. Helps build my confidence.

I feel more confident (x6)....More involvement with the community and others.

I understand people a lot better....I'm getting out more.

I have met some lovely people who have been friendly and helped me a lot with getting some training I thought I would never have interested before.

It has made me a lot more confident in myself and has shown me that I can be whoever I want to be and that I can achieve whatever I set out to do.

With new found confidence I gained a level 2 in Teaching and Learning and have just landed a full time post.....Given me an insight into the community.

It gets me out of the house and I meet new people

Volunteering gives me something worthwhile to do, and gets me out of the house so has made a big difference to me.

It has met with all of my expectations. I am happy with St Martin's Centre.

Support from volunteer coordinator

He is always available regardless of how busy he is. He is very supportive and informative. He is excellent at training.

I feel fully supported and am able to talk to him about any issues, concerns etc.

Helped me to do training and get qualifications....He is there whenever needed and offers training to prepare for different groups.

He has been here every time I have needed something and always kept me informed about what is going on.

Very supportive.

Responds to questions, but not had regular supervision.

The volunteer co-ordinator from St. Martin's has been more than helpful and tried to let me know when training or courses have been going to start.

Such good support in anything I want to do. Polite, helpful and very encouraging.

He was so easy to get along with and he helped me regain my confidence to go on a few training courses.

He is a great example to all volunteers and staff...His enthusiasm gets everyone going and he makes people feel welcome.I have not had much support but know he will be there if I need any.

Any questions I have had, have been answered, and understanding.....Always available to speak to you. Very friendly and kept informed.

He is always there when you need him, he has helped me to complete my UCAS form, given me references, supported me in my volunteering role and given me the confidence to try out new things. He is always supportive and his "can do" attitude is infectious, couldn't have done any of this without him.

Support from other staff

X is supportive throughout the youth club. Y is always supportive.

The staff have all been supportive and friendly...All the staff are friendly and always willing to help... Been made to feel very welcome... They are always there.

Sometimes good, but sometimes they do not really support volunteers.

The staff at St Martins have been more than helpful. They have helped myself a great deal. I know that if I had any concerns I could rely on them and their confidentiality.

Very well. Have all supported me through everything.

They helped show you how they wanted things done, were very helpful and nothing was ever too much trouble... They are polite and helpful.

Sometimes found ideas and points were not taken on board.

They all say thank you for me giving up my time and helping out.

There is always someone on reception and they are very supportive.

Staff are really good and allow you to learn and develop at your own rate, they are friendly and make you feel very welcome.

Support to progress onto other opportunities

I was offered training more or less the second I asked about volunteering....Always been made aware of the training that's available.

I have done lots of training inc. health and safety; Level 2 Working with Children etc

I've done a lot of training (x3)....Offers help with CVs etc.

I was not looking to seek any employment but I know that if this had been the case that they would have gone that extra mile for me or anyone else.

I was helped me get on a few training courses which has seen me now in full time employment.

As I am a retired person, have just wanted to help out at St Martin's Centre, and for the community.

If it wasn't for volunteering and in particular the advice and support from the volunteer co-ordinator, I'd never have progressed to higher education. I have also completed other training courses which have led to further qualifications.

Areas for improvement

More communication with centre staff.

Would be useful if the volunteers could meet each other informally at the centre (not in a pub). Communication is mainly via email. I don't use email much, so feel I miss out.

I have really enjoyed being a volunteer at St Martin's and I have missed going there for some time. I have been unable to get to help out as I have. I had a knee replacement and that has meant that I could not commit as much as I would have done but hopefully after the summer holidays I will have recovered enough to go back. There is a lot I would like to do when I do get back. I hope this has helped you with everything you need to know but I have enjoyed the things I have helped out with more than anything and can't wait to get back.

Everything is going great, can't wait to get into my proper role and to go further in my volunteering.

I had not worked for 18 years and after having raised my family. I did not know where to start. Drew picked me up and put me down on the right track and supported me well along the way.

Everything fine.

After a few teething problems where people didn't have a specific role, things seem to have fallen into place and I for one am very happy.

Appendix Three – User Survey Results

A survey of centre users was carried out during July and August 2012. This is a summary of the answers. 40 surveys were completed.

Headlines

- Most centre users are aware that volunteers support activities in the centre
- Centre users feel that they are made very welcome by volunteers
- Most centre users find it easy to approach volunteers
- Centre users feel that they (or their child) benefit from volunteers
- All centre users think that the centre as a whole benefits a lot from volunteers

Centre users were asked to rate volunteers on a scale from 1 to 5:

Volunteers are...	1	2	3	4	5
Welcoming					
Approachable					
Beneficial to Me					
Beneficial to the Centre					

Below are the answers given to each of the questions:

Q1. Do you know that volunteers support activities in the centre?

YES	82.5%
NO	15%
NOT SURE	2.5%

Q2. The following activities/services are supported by volunteers. Which of these do you (or your child) use/attend?

Follow My Lead	25%	Follow My Little Lead	15%
Parent and Toddlers	20%	Coffee Mornings	30%
Events e.g. fayres	20%	Pub Quiz Night	5%
Youth Club	5%	Reception	5%
Community Lunch	7.5%	Twins & More	7.5%
Thursday Group	12.5%	Dizzy Ducks	12.5%
Other	5%		

Q3. Using the scale below how welcome have the volunteers made you (and your child) feel?

Very Welcome

Not welcome

5	4	3	2	1
82.5%	15%	2.5%	0%	0%

The average score, out of a maximum of 5, was 4.8.

Q4. Using the scale below how easy do you find it to approach the volunteers?

Very easy

Not easy

5	4	3	2	1
77.5%	15%	7.5%	0%	0%

The average score, out a maximum of 5, was 4.7

Q5. Using the scale below, how beneficial do you think volunteers are to you personally (or your child)?

Very beneficial

Not beneficial

5	4	3	2	1
72.5%	15%	12.5%	0%	0%

The average score, out a maximum of 5, was 4.6

Q6. Using the scale below how beneficial do you think the volunteers are to the centre as a whole?

Very beneficial

Not beneficial

5	4	3	2	1
87.5%	12.5%	0%	0%	0%

The average score, out a maximum of 5, was 4.9

St. Martin's Survey on volunteers – Centre Users

Comments:

About volunteers

I did not realise that many of the groups were supported by volunteers. It is very helpful that they are, as the groups can go ahead regularly.

Volunteers are a great asset to the organisation and are worth their weight in gold.

Volunteers are a welcome asset to the centre. They are willing to help out. One in particular (name provided) helps at the Tea Club and is a great help to us all.

Volunteers are an invaluable resource, making the place run smoothly.

The volunteers are needed and easy to approach – not stuck up. Friendly and very helpful.

The centre would not run as smoothly as it does without volunteers. The centre, with the help of volunteers, is known as the heart of the community.

Having never been to a session before, I found myself feeling nervous, but your volunteers made me feel at ease and I soon relaxed. Now I regularly attend sessions with my son.

Staff and volunteers extremely friendly.

Volunteers offer an added friendly approach.

Volunteers are very helpful and approachable.

Volunteers are very good.

Very useful having volunteers.

General

My child has always got a lot of the groups and I love them too.

A very welcoming place with lovely friendly people. I'm delighted to have somewhere like this to bring my daughter.

The centre is good for me. It gives me time for myself. I have made a lot of friends.

It's always very welcoming and it's one of my favourite groups.

Very welcoming and friendly centre. I always feel comfortable and it is full of laughter which makes it a warm and comfortable environment.

The centre is very good.

Everyone has been very friendly, we have always been well looked after and feel very relaxed.

I am a support worker and bring a lady to the church service and coffee morning.

Appendix Four - Evaluation Workshop Statements

Workshop attended by 10 trustees, volunteers and staff in September 2012. Purpose: to test the findings of the evaluation with participants.

For each statement, participants were asked to *Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree* and give reasons.

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Dis-agree	Strongly Disagree	Reasons to agree	Reasons to disagree
1	The main benefit to volunteers is building of confidence	3	5	2		Yes, but volunteers can be confident – they are just seeking experience. Building confidence is very important: it leads to other opportunities and social inclusion. We have proved that some volunteers benefit from an increase in confidence. Have seen people become more confident. It is <u>one</u> of the main benefits. Many who begin as a volunteer lack confidence. Yes, but not only confidence, increased self-esteem and learning.	Volunteers bring skills, knowledge and experience with them. I would not say it is the main benefit - also provides varied work experience. I think it may be the good feeling from helping others.
2	The main benefit to the centre is that it allows more activities to be run	5	5			Activities could still run without volunteers, but they allow a wider range of activities. Without volunteers a lot of our projects would not run. It allows the centre to be used more. More services are running because of volunteers. Volunteers means paid workers are not over stretched. There are not enough paid staff to run all the activities and do their own job. For more activities to run, you need more people - with funding as it is, volunteers enable this to happen. There are now more volunteer-led groups than ever before. Yes, but it also allows a more "hands-on" approach and individual attention. More than likely because of their lack of interest - taking it for granted that volunteers are paid staff.	It's also about personal development. The main aim of the project is to upskill local people. Supporting and enhancing activities as well as allowing them to run. Paid member of staff is still needed for most groups.

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Dis-agree	Strongly Disagree	Reasons to agree	Reasons to disagree
3	Most centre users are unaware that volunteers work in the centre		4	6		Some centre users think that volunteers are paid staff. Not sure, though the volunteers do wear badges. Users are not particularly interested whether paid worker or volunteer. Unsure. Some users are surprised that volunteers run activities. Some occasional users may not be aware if volunteers are not wearing badges.	Tend to disagree - roles are advertised in reception and volunteers wear badges. Volunteering is also well advertised. Regular users get to know the volunteers. Volunteers are wearing badges more often. Volunteers are engrained into the centre's ethos. The publicity and high visibility of the programme makes it know, even if volunteers are not supporting the specific activity a user attends.
4	Having volunteers is very useful, but it is not an essential part of the centre's service		4	5	1	Staff have to adjust if volunteers are not available. Volunteers are useful, but centre services can change.	Tend to disagree. Areas may need more/less use of volunteers. In these times, I think it is essential. It is essential: having volunteers allows the centre to do so much more. Provides an improved operation.
5	A large majority of volunteers feel very well supported	5	5			All the staff that work with volunteers try their best to support them. The coordinator works really hard to support them. Based on feedback from volunteers, I tend to agree. Volunteers don't seem to have any complaints. Support for Volunteers has always been important, from both staff and other volunteers. The volunteer project offers a lot of support. Feedback from volunteers is overwhelmingly positive. They are appreciated by the staff who know their worth.	

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Reasons to agree	Reasons to disagree
6	The volunteer-ing project is working very well – there is nothing that needs improving	1	6	3	1	Although it works well, there is always room for improvement. I'm sure there are areas for improvement, but I get the impression that it is working really well. Well organised, good attendance by volunteers. Improvements should be continuous as volunteers change roles, people etc. It is working well, but there are always improvements needed.	There will always be room for improvement. It does work very well, but there is always room for improvement. It is going very well, but there is always need for evaluation and maybe improvement. Although the project is working well, there I always need for improvement - complacency is not the way to go.

If the the funding for the volunteer co-ordinator came to an end, which **one** of these statements do you **most** agree with? Please tick **one**

- A** Volunteering would probably come to an end, sooner or later - **1**
- B** Volunteering could continue, supported by experienced volunteers
- C** Volunteering could continue, supported by the remaining paid staff
- D** Volunteering could continue, supported by a combination of experienced volunteers and the remaining paid staff - **9**
- E** Other, please specify:

Reason for answers:

It would be difficult without a dedicated staff member. Would hope that by the end of the project, a few volunteers would be able to take this on, with some limited support from paid members of staff. Option C would put too much stress on paid staff. It could continue (D), but it may not offer the same support to volunteers as a dedicated co-ordinator.

Appendix Five – General Lessons for success – for wider dissemination

- Establish close working relationships with staff, including development of an understanding of the capacity and support needs of individual members of staff.
- Commitment needed at all levels: Chief Officer, Trustees, front line staff
- A genuine welcoming, supportive, inclusive, ethos.
- A business model which includes volunteers.
- Clear, written, roles for each volunteer opportunity. This helps to define the distinct responsibilities of staff and volunteers
- Written rules and procedures covering the general conduct of volunteers and the support they can expect.
- Volunteers appreciate a simple expression of thanks. A simple "thank you" makes volunteers feel more valued. Conversely, the absence of thanks makes them feel undervalued.
- A thorough and robust induction process can make a big difference to the success of a volunteer placement.
- Regular support and supervision, plus other opportunities to give feedback or, if necessary, to make a complaint.
- A personal development plan for each volunteer.
- Consistent, accessible, and ongoing support
- A system for expenses which ensures that no volunteer is out of pocket or has to wait too long for reimbursement.
- Supplement clear policies and procedures with informality and a personal touch.
- Ideally there should be support available from staff other than a volunteer coordinator