Midlothian Third Sector Interface
Annual Highlights 2017/18
Introduction

This report outlines activities of the Midlothian Third Sector Interface for the year 2017/18. The Third Sector Interface is made up of three partners: Midlothian Voluntary Action (MVA), the Social Enterprise Alliance Midlothian (SEAM), and Volunteer Midlothian. Between us we cover a wide range of activities to support and promote the Third Sector and volunteering.

2017/18 has been a year of both challenges and opportunities. Volunteer Midlothian has had an internal restructure of staffing in response to an increasingly difficult funding situation, which has, regrettably, led to a number of redundancies, and the end of some established services.

On a more positive note, the three partners in the Midlothian TSI are working increasingly closely together, and we look forward to developing this bond in the year ahead.

In a survey conducted in March 2018, 93% of volunteers who have used our services over the past year rated the TSI as excellent/good, 100% of VIOs who provided feedback rated the TSI support as excellent/good and 100% of VIOs who gave feedback stated that they felt better able to recruit, manage and retain volunteers as a result of using TSI.

Volunteers’ Week 2017

Our annual Volunteers’ Week Awards Ceremony took place on Thursday 1 June at Newbattle Abbey College. Over 100 local people attended and as always it was a really inspiring evening. We received over 40 nominations across a variety of categories and 16 awards were presented on the night. It was an excellent showcase of the dedication and commitment local people give to volunteering in Midlothian.

Volunteer of the Year was awarded to George Roy (Health in Mind) and Volunteer Team of the Year was awarded to the Dalkeith Museum Volunteer Team—both pictured below.
**TSI Training Programme**

We had a full and busy programme of TSI training, with nine courses running in our joint TSI Annual Training Programme. All the courses were offered free, and there were 97 attendees across the year. One of the key training needs for organisations this year was around the new GDPR requirements, and we are very grateful to Midlothian Council for the three training courses they gave us. The Alliance also provided us with GIRFEC Training for Trainers, and we benefited from courses from Senscot Legal and First Port. Thank you to all our trainers.

**Investing in Volunteers**

In July 2017, Volunteer Midlothian achieved the Investing in Volunteers (iIv) standard. iIv is the UK quality standard for all organisations which involve volunteers in their work and achievement of the standard demonstrates good practice in volunteer management.

Volunteering is at the heart of all that we do. As well as our work with organisations, we have around 100 volunteers who bring commitment and passion to their different roles. These roles include befriending isolated older people; IT tutoring to help bridge the digital divide; supporting people with dementia and community gardening. The iIv assessor noted that our “Volunteers were unanimously positive about their experience with Volunteer Midlothian, describing the effects volunteering has had on their confidence and work related skills, and the intrinsic satisfaction they derived from their roles.”

**Funding**

32 organisations benefited from support to identify appropriate funding sources and to write quality applications. 36 people attended our annual funding conference; thank you to The Robertson Trust, the Big Lottery Fund, and Corra Foundation for coming along and talking about their funding. MVA and a number of partners secured Scottish Government Aspiring Communities funding for some research in Woodburn and Central Dalkeith, which will hopefully lead to further investment in the area.
Volunteer Recruitment Fairs

During 2017 we held two events to help local organisations to recruit volunteers. Both events were held in Dalkeith, one in April and one in October. 40 organisations booked stalls across the two events and over 150 people attended.

Volunteer Midlothian Key Achievements in 2017/18

- We gave information and advice to 352 new volunteers
- We worked with 297 volunteer involving organisations
- We delivered presentations on volunteering to over 1000 adults and young people
- We held 23 stalls to promote volunteering
- 3 local organisations achieved the Volunteer Friendly Award

Volunteer Managers Forum

We held 4 meetings of our Volunteer Managers Forum during 2017/18. The Forum gives local volunteer managers the chance to come together quarterly and share ideas, access peer-support and find out about key developments in volunteering in Scotland. At each meeting we have a key speaker and a hot topic. During this year, the Forum organised their first joint event for Volunteers’ Week which was also part of the Big Lunch initiative. The group also developed a shared training calendar to allow them to pool resources.

Volunteer Handbook

In November 2017, we were delighted to launch our new Volunteer Handbook which is a user-friendly guide for all of our Volunteer Midlothian volunteers.

As part of working towards EFQM, Investing in Volunteers and the Volunteer Friendly Award this year, we decided to review our existing Volunteer Handbook. We decided to make it much more user-friendly including plenty of photographs, quotes and case studies. Feedback on the new handbook has been very positive.
Saltire Awards

It has been a particularly successful year in acknowledging young volunteers achievements through Saltire Awards. 364 Saltire awards were awarded to young people throughout Midlothian which corresponds to 11,940 hours of volunteering completed. 5 prestigious Saltire Summit Awards were also formally presented during our annual Volunteers’ Week Awards Ceremony. During this year, Saltire also reached a huge milestone nationally with over 100,000 certificates being awarded to young people since the scheme began.

Support to Volunteer

In 2016, we expanded our Volunteering Support Service to include a small number of adults with support needs, as well as young people. This service offers extra assistance with preparing to volunteer (e.g. completing application forms, attending initial meetings with organisations etc.), as well as delivery of Get Ready for Volunteering Courses, including tasters of volunteering. 6 courses have been delivered this year with over 30 people attending, including one course specifically targeting individuals who have experienced mental health problems.

Midlothian Growing Together

Volunteer Midlothian’s Midlothian Growing Together project had another busy year during 2017/18, continuing to deliver regular volunteering sessions for young people and adults with additional needs. We held two successful open days in our Community Garden and also delivered several workshops such as the one pictured below. Unfortunately, we were unable to secure future funding for the project beyond March 2018 and so our adult sessions had to come to an end, but we still continue to offer regular sessions to young volunteers through our Transform project.

Transforming young people’s lives

Over the last 12 months the Transform team has yet again faced a massive demand from young people keen to volunteer. The team has delivered volunteering information presentations to over 1000 pupils in this time and has had around 120 young people take part in 250 supported volunteering activity sessions. This year, these sessions included Intergenerational Befriending, Gardening, Playschemes, and Primary School Gardening and Coding clubs. 87% of young people taking part considered themselves to be more desirable to other positive destinations as a result of their volunteering and 96% felt more confident as a result of their volunteering.
Social Enterprise Alliance Midlothian

In 2017/18, SEAM provided one to one business support to 27 separate local organisations, social entrepreneurs and partnerships. We ran a social enterprise workshop for children through the Art Club in Woodburn, and brought together a group of local social entrepreneurs to inspire each other with their bright ideas.

We have been involved in some standout partnership projects. These include:

In It Together Mayfield and Easthouses

This project started with the Mayfield & Easthouses Community Empowerment Project, funded by NHS Lothian, and developed by MVA’s Miriam Leighton. SEAM is supporting the In It Together Partnership — five community-based organisations — to pursue their long-term vision for regenerating the Mayfield Town Centre area. We supported the In It Together group with the next step of this project, which was a ‘Roadmap to Regeneration’ report, focusing on identifying the future needs and challenges for the community and service provision in Mayfield/Easthouses. The partnership’s application for Leader funding for its town centre masterplan was unsuccessful, but the group entered negotiations with Midlothian Council for a future asset transfer of the site of the Mayfield Leisure Centre (which has now been demolished).

Growing Together Midlothian

With funding support from the Scottish Government’s Social Innovation Fund, SEAM worked in collaboration with the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, to bring together a network of community gardeners, growers and development trusts interested in local food and growing. The group focused on sharing skills and knowledge, swapping ideas, and identifying desired next steps for building a local sustainable food economy.

Community Care Forum - Development Worker

- Monthly peer support Café Connect, went from strength to strength throughout 2018.
- Midlothian Older People’s Assembly (MOPA) met four times. Themes of the meetings included - GP appointments, Transport, Older People Getting Involved, Being Informed, Being Connected in my community, Living Well.
- “Get Ready for Winter in Midlothian” - Newsletter for Older people produced and printed. 200 copies distributed. Will be available in Midlothian Libraries.
- “Preparing for Winter” in Midlothian. A Winter Newsletter for Disabled People living in Midlothian, produced and printed.
- Continued to support Disabled People to attend and influence Joint Physical Disability Planning Group strategy and Older Person to attend and influence Joint Older Persons Planning group and strategy.
**Community Links Befriending & Dementia Projects**

During 2017/18, our Community Links Befriending & Community Links Dementia projects went from strength to strength working with over 250 vulnerable adults, supporting them to reconnect with their local communities with the help of volunteer befrienders or by attending group sessions. 95 volunteers were recruited, trained and supported to deliver the projects during this time.

In November 2017, one of the volunteers was awarded ‘Dementia Friendly Walking Volunteer of the Year’ at the Paths for All Volunteer Awards. Sandra Brown (pictured above) was given this award for all her hard work leading the Penicuik Walking Group.

Unfortunately, despite the great successes of these two projects, Midlothian Council took the decision not to continue to fund both beyond March 2018.

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**Connect Online**

The Connect Online project aims to reduce feelings of social isolation, maintain independence and improve digital skills and confidence in isolated older people across Midlothian by providing them with free one-to-one IT tuition either within their own homes, in a library or in a group setting.

The project has greatly benefitted from partnership working with the venues where the computer clubs take place - Midlothian Libraries, Castle Rock Edinvar Sheltered Housing Complexes, Melville Housing Association, Cowan Court and Grassy Riggs Hub for older people.

We have many satisfied customers: “I’m glad I came, I’m really glad. I didn’t have confidence to do this (use the iPad) because my husband did that but now I feel more independent” “It’s been good learning, its less scary now” “I’ve learnt something new every week!”

As a volunteer-run service, we depend on a number of committed individuals sharing their IT knowledge. Our volunteers said: “I really enjoy seeing the pleasure that learners get from mastering skills they have often thought would be beyond them, and the increased confidence that goes with that…” “I find it really rewarding when my trainee is able to take away what I have taught them and can send emails, use the PC, register for M&S free tea and coffee.”

Thank you to our partners and our wonderful volunteers!
Staff Changes in 2017/18

During 2017/18 we had a number of staff changes in the TSI. In April 2017, Stephanie Heasman left Volunteer Midlothian when funding for our Assistive Technology (AT) Home Project came to an end. Our Director, Anne Moodie left the organisation in November 2017 after over 10 years with Volunteer Midlothian. In March 2018 we unfortunately lost a number of staff due to funding cuts as well as an organisational restructure. Sue Dick and Roisin Fitzsimons both took voluntary redundancy and Mags Bryan, Kat Dunlop, Graeme Egan and Claire Spiden all left when their project funding came to an end. We are deeply saddened to report that our friend and colleague Sue Dick sadly passed away in October 2018 after a period of ill health.

Ian Cheyne left MVA in June 2017 to start a new life in America. He is much missed by his former colleagues.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our dedicated staff, trustees and volunteers for all their commitment and hard work throughout the year.