



Newsletter December 2020

Local News

Intergenerational Connections Help Spread Christmas Cheer

At the Adult Befriending Service, we have been busy on the run up to Christmas organising intergenerational activities to help bring Christmas cheer to our service users (befriended).

Although our befriending groups have been unable to meet since March this year, we thought it would be great if we could get some young folk from our community to make cards for our befriended. Luckily, we were able to get some of the children at Papdale Primary and the Hope Community School on board to make cards for us to send out. These cards have been sent out along with our Christmas Activity Packs.



Thank you so much to all the children who took the time to make these cards. We are sure they will be appreciated and will help to spread some Christmas spirit.

Meanwhile, our group “Bridging the Gap,” are also gearing up for Christmas with a flurry of Christmas cards being sent from the children at St Andrews Nursery and older folk in the East Mainland.

Prior to lockdown, we had an intergenerational group called “All Together Wednesdays” for the young people from the Connect Project and the residents of the Eunson Kloss housing scheme.

For Christmas, Connect have written cards to the residents of Eunson Kloss. Thank you to the Co-op in Kirkwall for kindly donating the cards.

We are currently looking for telephone and 1 to 1 befrienders. If you have an hour or so a week to spare and are interested in befriending somebody aged 60 years or more please get in touch with us to find out more: [Alison](mailto:Alison@connect.org.uk) – 07748 905127; [Kasia](mailto:Kasia@connect.org.uk) – 07552 600658.

Kirkwall Christmas Tree Festival 2020



Six Christmas trees lit up the courtyard of The Orkney Museum from 1 - 12 December.

Youth Development Workers at VAO wanted to get young people involved in a project that they could work on all together, even if they had to make the decorations in their own homes, so asked local youth groups to create decorations for their very own Christmas tree.

The trees looked fabulous, all with very different types of homemade decorations, which had been made over zoom calls, in classroom and in their club settings. The trees themselves were purchased with a donation from Kirkwall BID, so each tree had a penguin on it as a nod to The March of The Penguins that they have been running this year.

The groups that took part were The Young People's Befriending Project, Connect, The Youth Café, Ypeople, Women's Aid

Orkney, Stromness Youth Clubs and pupils from Kirkwall Grammar School's 'Get Ready To Volunteer' program.

Along with the trees, some pupils from Kirkwall Grammar School made Winter Warmer Baubles to sell – a bauble that was filled with a hot chocolate sachet, some marshmallows and chocolates to make a delicious hot drink! They sold out by lunchtime on the first day that they were selling, with proceeds going to The Orkney Foodbank.

There was also an area to make donations to the foodbank, with both monetary and food donations welcomed. In total, £629.15 was very generously given along with 3 large bags of food!

Over 450 people came to view the trees, and everyone seemed delighted to have a bit of sparkle and Christmas cheer added to the very strange year that it has been.

Get Ready To Volunteer project

Pupils from Kirkwall Grammar School have just completed their 'Get Ready To Volunteer' course, resulting in each of them achieving their Team Saltire Award. To gain the certificates, the group were involved in two community projects: creating a family Gruffalo and fairy trail within the walled garden beside the school, as well as creating lovely wooden decorations for the Kirkwall Christmas Tree Festival. The project was run by Voluntary Action Orkney, and Kirsty Rochford (Youth Development Worker) said "The group was really engaged with every part of the project and created some fantastic items for both the trail and the tree. It was a real pleasure running the workshops, and to work with such an enthusiastic group of young people."

VAO Christmas Closure

VAO will close on Thursday 24 December and reopen on Tuesday 5 January 2021. All at VAO wish you a safe and peaceful festive season. Thank you to all the organisations, volunteers, partners and funders for the work you have done during a very challenging period and we look forward to working with you in the New Year.

Also in the News

Cruse Bereavement Care

Grieving the death of a loved one is difficult at any time of year, but there are some dates and seasons where it can feel even more painful. Special dates like anniversaries, birthdays or festivals, like Christmas, can feel daunting, and perhaps overwhelming, to prepare for.

2020 has been a year like no other! With so many areas of life disrupted, alongside the complications which the COVID-19 restrictions bring, we know that grief may feel very difficult to navigate over this festive period.

If things are difficult, talking to someone can really help and our helpline is available for support right through the Christmas period.



FREEPHONE
0808 802 6161

 Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland	Mon. 21 Dec - Wed. 23 Dec	9am - 8pm
	Christmas Eve	9am - 4pm
	Christmas Day	10am - 12pm & 5pm - 7pm
	Sat. 26 Dec - Sun. 27 Dec	1pm - 4pm
	Mon. 28 Dec - Wed. 30 Dec	9am - 8pm
	New Year's Eve	9am - 4pm
	Fri. 1 Jan - Sun. 3 Jan	1pm - 4pm

Legislation & Guidance

Holding online meetings- SCIO legislation

The timescales to allow SCIO's (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations) to hold online meetings has been extended.

These regulations extend the 'relevant period' set out in Schedule 14 of the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020, meaning that SCIOs can continue to hold remote members meetings until 30 March 2021.

The continuing restrictions necessitated by COVID-19 mean that a SCIOs ability to hold general or members' meetings in person (where this is specified in the constitution) is limited. These regulations allow SCIOs to use remote methods, such as video conference or phone calls to hold meetings with their members if they need to.

The time period originally ran until 30 December 2020, this is now extended for a final 3 months to 30 March 2021.

In the current climate you should consider making a change to your constitution to allow online meetings a permanent amendment.

If you need any advice, please contact malcolm.scott@vaorkney.org.uk

Education & Training



Calling all Community Learning and Development workers...

Do you work in the field of Community Learning and Development? Would you like to find out about learning opportunities available from the [CLD Standard Council](#) (CLDSC)? If yes, then it would be worth attending one of the following online sessions which will provide an overview of [i-develop](#), answer any questions and share information about CLDSC, how to register, the benefits of registration and what professional learning opportunities are available. Sessions will take place on the following dates and you can register [here](#).

Thursday 14 January 12-1pm

Friday 19 February 2-3pm

Wednesday 17 March 5-6pm

Have your say



Strengthening Scottish Charity Law Survey

This engagement follows on from a previous consultation in 2019 which sought views on potential improvements to the statutory charity regulation framework in Scotland. The consultation looked at proposals put forward by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

The proposals broadly focus on improvements to charity law that would increase transparency and accountability in order to maintain public trust and confidence in charities and OSCR.

Scottish Government are restarting engagement with the charity sector to develop and refine the proposals consulted on in 2019. This will provide stakeholders with an opportunity to help Scottish Government formulate a position on the way forward with charity law.

Scottish Government want to hear from people working in and with the charity sector, members of the public, and anyone with an interest in charity law.

The majority of respondents supported the proposals in the 2019 consultation, however the analysis report made clear that more policy development work and stakeholder engagement was required before we could bring forward any legislative changes.

This engagement will build on the previous consultation responses and will assist the Scottish Government in deciding the next steps for charity law.

Click [here](#) to give your views. The survey closes on 5 February 2021.

Focus on.....Orkney MS Society



Hi, my name is George Hannah and I have been the Co-ordinator of the Orkney Group, of the MS Society for the past 5 years. Or (if you are a certain vintage, like myself) also known as the Chairperson of the local branch.

The MS Society has had a group / branch in Orkney for many a year. In fact, my first involvement with them, was around 30 years ago, when my wife Cath, was diagnosed with MS. We were both very young then...

Whilst we are basically a standalone entity, in some ways, we are part of a national body. This can cause a wee bit of confusion, but I would confirm that we have our own bank account, separate from the national body and operated by the designated signatories of the local group only.

We also have to complete an annual return, as well as regularly detailing all our financial entries and providing an annual budget.

What is MS?

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a neurological condition. It is the result of damage to the myelin sheath, a protective covering surrounding nerve fibres of the central nervous system. When the myelin sheath is damaged this interferes with messages between the brain and other parts of the body. For some people, MS is characterised by periods of relapse and remission while for others it has a progressive pattern. For everyone affected by MS either as a sufferer or as a relative or carer, it makes life a little unpredictable.

MS affects around 100,000 people in the UK, and each year around 5,000 people are newly diagnosed with the condition. As a result, around one in every 600 people in the UK has MS and that each week, 100 people are diagnosed with MS.

Most people are diagnosed between the ages of 20-40, but it can affect younger and older people too. Roughly three times as many women have MS as men.

Orkney has been referred to as the MS Capital of the world. Whilst we have no recent reports to confirm this, the last official report in 2012 stated that Orkney has the highest rate of MS in the world, with a rate for probable or definite MS was 402 per 100,000 people, up from a previous 309 per 100,000 which was recorded in 1974. This compared to a rate of 167 per 100,000 for the UK as a whole.

The MS Society

The MS Society is the UK's leading MS charity. They have been providing information and support, funding research and fighting for change since 1953. The Society has approx. 26,000 members, over 5,500 volunteers, and has invested £155 million in world class MS research since 1956. They provide online information and an award winning series of publications on all things MS. They support 260 local groups all over the UK, including here in Orkney, and offer a helpline and email support and run courses and resources for health and social care professionals.

MS Society Orkney Branch

The MS Orkney branch It is run by a small committee of volunteers, the majority of whom have MS or family affected by MS, and aims to help and assist those affected by MS whenever possible.

It is a source of information and offers financial assistance, by way of grants which for example, can be used to assist in such things as the purchase of equipment, fund a break, or even music lessons. We are happy to look to assist wherever we can.

We also contribute funding into research connected with Multiple Sclerosis.

We currently run two social outings a year, one in the summer and one at Christmas. We also offer classes, sessions or events where there is a want / need or interest shown.

We are looking to bring the Society's activities to more people's attention and to reach those people either newly diagnosed or who are not aware of what we can offer.



How Covid-19 affected us

Covid-19 impacted all areas of our work:

- Put an immediate stop to our weekly exercise and art classes. Whilst our excellent exercise tutors offered to provide classes online, it was something that we were not quite ready for e.g. lack of technology and the participants weren't keen trying online sessions. Stopped the weekly massage sessions, that we shared costs with the local MS Therapy Centre. Approx. 20 folks attended these sessions.
- Cancelled our plans for our planned 'income' raising events: MS week - including planned collections at various stores; Our week in the Blue Door; Our annual coffee afternoon; potential involvement in YPI.
- On the social side, it stopped: our monthly get togethers; our two annual outings - summer and Christmas, which in the past few years, have seen approx. upwards of 60 folks attending each one; MS week - usually have at least one social event then; a planned art exhibition, of the fantastic work, the art class are producing; our annual coffee afternoon; the use of the 'free' cinema card we used to offer for folks affected by MS.
- It has also affected our National Office in similar ways although, including them having to make the difficult decisions to cut the number of paid employees and to halt the national grant system (note - the local groups can continue to operate this, but that requires the groups to use the funds held in their own accounts).

The cancellation of fundraising events contributed to a dramatic fall in income for the Orkney branch, with income for this year to date approximately 13.65% of the same time last year, - a fall of 86.35%! - with expenditure standing at 69.4% of same time last year.

Despite the lack of income and other restrictions, over lockdown we have:

- Arranged online get togethers. These have helped folks stay in touch and also help us all begin learning the scary world of technology.
- Held joint mindfulness sessions with Shetland, with another 8 week session just beginning.
- With the help and support of the art tutor (Sheena Graham-George) and the class, we have successfully transferred the weekly art class online.
- Successfully applied for and was awarded, through the Connecting Scotland scheme, 6 iPads and 2 chrome books. These are already being used by folks affected by MS, to have an online presence. To help them stay in touch with family and friends, attend online classes/sessions and is something that we are very keen on encouraging and assisting where possible.
- Attempted to keep in regular contact with various folks in the local MS Community and nationally.
- Already planning a new activity for next year June/July, which involves a local (and national) sports body, as well as Scottish Disability Sport.
- Have been here for folks. Continued our online presence, locally through the MS in Orkney Facebook Page and nationally, via the MS Society. And always at the end of a phone.



Some peedle cards for Christmas.
Lovely produced by
the Orkney MS Art Group



This year has certainly been 'challenging' for everyone and charities have not been immune. We had thought that we had lost any chance of making small inroads to our lost income this year. Then, during a zoom meeting with our Shetland colleagues, they advised they had held an online baking auction earlier in the year, which had been very successful. We enquired what it was involved, as we instantly loved the idea and after some discussion, thought we should give it serious consideration.

It was totally untried here, as far as we were aware, so we were a bit apprehensive. But decided to go for it. And the Orkney folks stepped in and made it an amazing event.

It was a steep learning curve for everyone concerned, but the support and encouragement we received was amazing and resulted in a huge success, both financially and in raising the profile, and hopefully the awareness, of MS locally.

Over the weekend that the auction was live, £2360 was raised via the bid online. Since then, further donations (including the incredible anonymous donation, which matched the initial amount of £2360) have been received. What can we say? It has been funny old year...let's hope we don't have one like this again.

