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Case Study: Northern Fells Group Lend-a-Hand Scheme

July 2015

The Northern Fells Group is a Community Charity operating in the parishes of Bolton, Caldbeck, Castle Sowerby, Ireby with Uldale, Sebergham & Welton, and Westward & Rosley, in Allerdale and Eden districts.

Its aim is to 'fill in the gaps' in community services to enable people to remain happy and independent in their own homes. It covers 200 square miles, with a population of around 3600.

Background

Research carried out as part of the Northern Fells Rural Project - one of HRH The Prince of Wales' three Rural Revival Initiative Projects - identified the need for low key practical help and support for people of any age who are ill, disabled or their carers.

When the Project ended the Northern Fells Group (NFG) was formed to continue and develop its work. This included the Lend a Hand Group, with 18 volunteers and a part-time paid coordinator contracted to work 10 hours per week.

The initial six month pilot scheme was a success and the group has gone from strength to strength, currently having 30 volunteers. A 'benefit worker' is also paid and contracted to work 5 hours per week.

The Project

The Lend a Hand Group offers:

- Handyman Scheme e.g. gardening, replacing light bulbs and putting up curtain poles providing help for up to 2 hours
- Domestic and Personal Help (walking dogs, home from hospital support, carer relief and accompanying people on shopping trips etc.)
- Help with Benefits - finding out about eligibility and completing forms.
- Medical Loan Scheme (in conjunction with the British Red Cross) - loan of medical equipment e.g. wheelchairs and commodes.




Lend a Hand Volunteer providing gardening help

From April 2014 to March 2015 there were a total of 448 two hour assists as part of the Land a Hand scheme, not including help with benefits.

A dedicated telephone number and email address has been set up to contact the Lend a Hand coordinator. When a referral is received the coordinator in most cases visits the client and assesses what is required and which volunteer(s) would be best suited for the task. The majority of the referrals received are self referrals, repeat clients, or from volunteers.

The client may only require our assistance once, or if they need domestic and personal care may require our help over a longer period. In these cases many of the volunteers and clients become very good friends. It is important to note that we do not provide a care package, but provide what would be described as neighbourly help.



Boltons, Caldbeck, Castle Sowerby,
Ireby with Uldale, Mungrisdale,
Sebergham & Welton and Westward & Rosley

Northern Fells Group

The Lend a Hand Group organises a weekly Tai Chi exercise class and a monthly 'Coffee and a Chat' get together. The volunteers also help with other Northern Fells Group activities such as: Lunch Groups, Drop Ins, Information Days and fundraising.

Volunteers time and work is given free and clients pay for any materials needed. Costs to run the scheme include: a part time paid coordinator; laptop and phone line, travel expenses (coordinator and volunteers); leaflet printing; and insurance. Publicity through local newsletters is free.

The Northern Fells Group employ a dedicated fundraiser to support the different projects they deliver, including the Lend a Hand scheme which is currently supported by: Northern Rock Foundation, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Neighbourhood Care Independence Programme, and donations.

The Learning

Articles in local newsletters, and leaflets printed by the group are used to promote the group, however, this is best done locally by word of mouth.

We aim to provide the best possible help to our clients, which also encourages them to spread the word and request further help themselves in the future.

In order to provide a quality service we:

- Contact all clients within 24 hours of a referral or request for help.
- Require two references and a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) certificate for all volunteers.
- Ensure that volunteers are suited to the tasks allocated to them.
- Provide information to volunteers via regular meetings and newsletters (see below).
- Check the clients are happy with the help that has been provided to them.

Volunteers receive a monthly newsletter and Lend a Hand meetings are organised 3 times a year, with a guest speaker e.g. Deafvision and Alzeihemers Society. This ensures that volunteers who assist only occasionally are kept in the loop and feel part of the team.

Contact Details

For more information about the Lend a Hand scheme please contact Gail Dewis, Northern Fells Group Lend a Hand Coordinator on:

Tel: 016974 77196

Email: gail.dewis@northernfellsgroup.org.uk

NFG website: www.northernfellsgroup.org.uk

ACT champions community and rural issues

ACTION with Communities in Cumbria, Offices O - Q Skirsgill Business Park, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 0FA
T: 01228 817224 | www.cumbriaaction.org.uk | info@cumbriaaction.org.uk | Follow us on Twitter @ACTCumbria
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