



FOCUS RSVP NEWS



March/April 2015

CSV-RSVP's Monthly Newsletter for Co-ordinators, Organisers and Volunteers

NEW CSV BRANDING AND NEW RSVP MANAGER:

A MESSAGE FROM LAURA DOUGHTY CSV DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND INCOME GENERATION

Hello all, and I hope you had an enjoyable Easter weekend.

I'm **Laura Doughty**, CSV's Director of External Affairs and Income Generation. I wanted to introduce myself to you via FOCUS, and I hope to meet many of you in the not too distant future.

I joined CSV six months ago, and since then have been busy with the rebranding project—code name *Blue Banana!* (Don't ask!!) It's a hugely exciting project and one that I am passionate about, as I firmly believe it will enable us to engage with more people, and do more of the great work that we do up and down the country.

That's why I wanted to share this update with you and bring you up to speed **(and this bit is all confidential for now, so please keep it**



Laura Doughty

under your hat until launch day on 27th April).

What and Why?

We play a vital role in transforming people's lives. We want to increase that impact we make and increase the number of volunteers we attract. We want to do more of what we do well. Our new focused strategy is clear, concentrating on four main pillars of social action volunteering – older people, disabled people, families at risk and young people.

What's wrong with the CSV name and brand?

It's served us well historically but times change and we have changed. We need to talk to new audiences. CSV is most commonly used as an acronym—but it doesn't help us say what we do or convey the life-changing work we undertake. It looks dated and doesn't link all our numerous programmes and activities. It

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doesn't help us carve out our territory or promote us, especially to the new audiences which are essential for our growth.

Need

We needed to develop a new distinctive and relevant brand with a clear message. We surveyed staff and volunteers and a clear message coming back was that no one in the wider world "*knows what CSV stands for.*"

CSV's New Name

After considerable consultation with staff and volunteers, and after taking professional advice, we can now announce our new name:

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS ***Leading UK volunteering in policy and practice***

We hope you are pleased with this new branding which we are convinced will take us forward into the future as a vital and powerful charity. **This brand will be applied across the entire organisation in April. Guidelines and details including our logo will follow.**

Older Volunteers

As I mentioned above, working with older people is one of the four strategic pillars of our social action volunteering remit, and in that context RSVP volunteers have a continuing crucial role. You are all diligent and committed RSVP volunteers, and there are 18,000 of you across the UK making a fantastic difference in your communities. In **Volunteering Matters** this will develop and grow and prosper.

New RSVP Manager

This will be enhanced by the arrival in April of **Yvonne Ogden**, the new *Business Development Manager for RSVP and Older People*. Yvonne has been with CSV for three years already, working in Norfolk as a project manager on some of our disabled people's projects there. It's great to have a dedicated manager on RSVP and I'm really looking forward to Yvonne getting around the country to meet volunteers, and help grow the programme.

Best Wishes

Laura

Citywise

Citywise, RSVP's lottery-funded pan-London project continues to expand and develop a whole range of varied and valuable community projects. Volunteer **Kosar Alali** of the Meshdakh Cultural Community recently organised a meeting to commemorate International Mothers' Language Day. This included many speakers who highlighted the importance of having the right to use their mother tongue to communicate and be educated in their own societies, which is not the case in many parts of the world. Often being forced to speak other languages leads to unacceptable inequalities.



The meeting created an opportunity for people of diverse communities and different languages—including Farsi, Arabic, and Turkish—to exchange ideas about the importance of their mother tongue. It was also an opportunity to socialise and enjoy each other's company. As Kosar says, "*Handicrafts were displayed in a corner of the hall to exemplify a part of the history, culture and traditions of Arab people, and guests were served with traditional and local Arab people's*



food. Poems in Arabic accompanied with Kurdish music on the tape were played, and Arabic and Farsi poems were recited "with a sweet and heartfelt accent."

Kosar felt it was an uplifting occasion, "*with the hope of a better tomorrow for everyone.*"

WEST REGION

Bob Spreads the RSVP Message

Bob Maggs, West Region's Regional Coordinator, was recently featured in a brilliant article in the *Bristol Post* promoting RSVP and the value of volunteering. As Bob said, referring to the experience faced by many when they retire, "On Friday everyone talks to you and you are an important person and by Monday morning you are a nobody. When you stop working, unless you hated your job, you realise it was a sociable activity with colleagues and people who say hello to you. Volunteering helps people remain a valuable part of the community. Believe it or not we get people coming to us three months before they retire saying they want some volunteer work lined up so they have no break between the two." Bob noted that RSVP has 1,000 people over the age of 50 volunteering with them across Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset and North Somerset. Outlining its success he said, "Like so many of the best ideas it is so simple. There is an army of old people out there with a vast range of skills and experience. That's the wonderful thing. Absolutely everybody has something to give. It could be a former tea lady from BAE who has an amazing smile and is great with kids. Or it could be someone who has been a very high flyer whose management experience can be utilised elsewhere."



As Bob points out, the army of volunteers he can call on are "staggeringly good value" given that annual out-goings come in at about £10,000 which pays volunteers' expenses and RSVP West has no salaried members. Anybody is welcome at RSVP and unlike other agencies they can request the sort of volunteering they would like to do.



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"I would say most of us are in our sixties but we have people who are 100 as there is no age limit," Bob said. "If they want to work in a school we find them a school or if they want something else we will find it for them. The crucial thing is we work in groups so again you have that social environment which had disappeared when you retired."

Essentially there are three areas where the volunteers are involved – helping the needy, helping in schools with numeracy and literacy and broader projects such as working on the Matthew, a local boat. In addition RSVP West has been tasked by Bristol City Council to carry out assessments at care homes.

"It is very exciting for us and a role that comes with a lot of responsibility," Bob said. "As lay assessors our role is to see what it is like to live there, speak to the residents and get their thoughts. It is all about the quality of life for the residents. At first care homes didn't like us being there but now they have no choice because the council made it a requirement and now they realise in the main we are trying to help." So impressed has the council been with RSVP they are looking to widen their assessment responsibilities into home care and possibly even children's services.

"I've had a fantastic time," concludes Bob, "and the great thing is if this role were to get too much I can take up a lesser one and continue to contribute."



Bob is also very pleased with West Region's new restyling—"to make ourselves look more modern and interesting!" - including an excellent reformatted newsletter edited by **Sue Silvey**, a role she has undertaken in addition to her work as Surgery Schemes Organiser for Bristol. The latest edition includes articles on experiences in school volunteering and as lay assessors.

Secondary Schools
Joan Whitehead, Regional Schools Development Organiser reports:
The majority of our school volunteers in Bath

and North East Somerset support reading in primary schools. Helping pupils become literate at this stage of their education is vital if they are to become fluent readers, make the transition to secondary school and access other areas of the



curriculum. Until recently secondary schools have been unknown territory for RSVP volunteers who have often felt apprehensive at being with older pupils. Last academic year saw a change with three secondary schools—Bath Community Academy, Hayesfield and Ralph Allen—hosting six volunteers to support young people’s learning in maths, science, modern foreign languages and literacy.

The volunteers brought a wealth of experience from their own professional lives and interests and were able, under the supervision of the class teacher, to share their enthusiasm and expertise. **Jennifer Bevan** at BCA was able to support a pupil who was struggling to read expressively. The boy’s grandmother was delighted at the progress he made as he drew on Jenny’s theatrical experiences to overcome his difficulty. Another volunteer, **Rob Gillman**, also at BCA, who’d had a career in finance, worked alongside staff with Year 11 pupils to give them extra support in maths, while **Elizabeth Miller**, a fluent French speaker, enabled young people at Ralph Allen to have additional oral practice in French. Rob’s input to BCA led to him being proposed for a place on the Academy’s Council.

These placements in secondary schools have been thoroughly rewarding for the volunteers as well as benefiting the pupils and the schools, and we hope to place more volunteers with secondary pupils in the future.

Lay Assessors

Volunteer **Jude Tomlinson** reports on her experience as a lay assessor:

There is hardly a visit to a care home when I don’t return home thinking ‘that was a good ex-

perience’. Listening to the residents talk about their past lives is fascinating and enjoyable but also helps build rapport, encouraging them to discuss any concerns they may have about their care. Chatting to relatives gives a further insight into the residents’ life stories but also allows grievances to be discussed in an informal way. Observing staff interacting with residents is informative and can highlight issues relating to poor communication and lack of engagement. Now the RSVP scheme is linked to Bristol City Council, I think we have a good opportunity to ensure that quality of life for residents in care homes becomes an important part of the quality assurance process. We now have the credentials to gather evidence and push for change which can make a real difference to the everyday lives of residents.

RSVP Snippets

GRANDMENTORS

This is a valuable scheme in certain London boroughs matching older people to youngsters who are not in employment education or training to provide support. Our CEO **Oonagh Aitken** recently met with Lord David Freud—who has specifically supported the Grandmentors programme through his family trust for a number of years—and he confirmed that the Freuds want to continue to support the programme and see it expand.

SCOTTISH ADVISORY BOARD

Oonagh attended the Scottish Advisory Board at the end of February, and as she says:

“We have developed a strategic plan for Scotland and hope to see our work there develop and expand over the next few years. The Board had a presentation from David Budd. David manages the RSVP work in central Scotland and is working hard to expand the volunteering in schools, hospitals and the communities.”

BERLIN CONFERENCE

Oonagh also recently spoke at a European conference in Berlin and made a presentation on how volunteering contributes to active ageing. Oonagh said, *“The participants were really interested to hear about our **RSVP programme** and our intergenerational projects in particular. The Norwegian leaders of the European project which organised the conference are keen to find out more about CSV and our work with older people as both volunteers and beneficiaries.”*

Wales

Goodbye to David

One of my best correspondents over the years has been **David Howells**, Volunteer Schools Organiser. I've just heard that David has decided to leave RSVP but with wonderful memories:

*Dear Colin,
Sorry to let you know that I will be soon be leaving RSVP. Since 2000 I have been a schools volunteer and enjoyed being an RSVP member where I met many many kind and pleasant people (and a few miseries!) In that time you were kind enough to include some of my articles in FOCUS, for which I am so very grateful. In my spare time I intend to write a book on my time with RSVP, my travels and various features of my life that might raise a laugh or two.
Your encouragement has been pivotal to my even attempting to try. Very many thanks to you. I wish you good luck for the future. Our motto "Make a Difference" has certainly made a difference to me.
Yours sincerely,
David Howells*

Thank you for your kind thoughts, David, and good luck for the future. I'll certainly look forward to seeing that book which I hope will be full of those wonderful quirky stories which always made your FOCUS pieces so engaging!

Ammanford Steps Out



Anne May, Carmarthenshire Project Coordinator with the Welcome Friends Scheme, reports on a wonderful dance activity:
The Welcome Friends Project and Age Cymru

Sir Gar's Befriending Links have teamed up with dance instructor **Jon Dunbar** to host a series of dances at the Amman Centre in Ammanford. Dancing includes ballroom, Latin and line dancing and the afternoon includes teaching as well as social dances. **Rhian Davies** and I are really pleased with the turnout which has already increased from 20 to 40. However we are keen to see more men willing to learn some basic steps and partner the many women!

Swansea Knitters

Swansea RSVP Knitters meet at the Grand Theatre every month to have a chat, a cup of tea and a raffle—but in the main to bring along all the wonderful knitted items they have made since the last meeting. As Organiser **Diane Lewis** says, "All of our ladies are exceptionally good knitters and can usually be relied on to knit whatever is asked of them. Every few months we have a speaker—the latest ones being a man from 'The Mr X Appeal' (which collects items for needy Swansea children during the Christmas period) and a lady demonstrating how to make jewellery."

About 25 or 30 ladies usually come along, some knitters and some school readers. Diane adds, "Most of our ladies knit a wide variety of items—blankets for care homes, garments and toys for several worthy causes in the local area. We also join in a few craft fairs during the year, and any money raised is donated to a local charity. This year we donated £250 to Bikeability, a local charity set up to teach people with disabilities how to ride bikes. In May we have been invited to visit the centre in a local rugby club to see them at work."

Two of the members, **Thelma Nicholas** and **Betty Griffiths** are long term readers at Blaenymaes School, and have given the school several theme-based knitted toys to be used as educational aids to help the children to read. A firm favourite is a knitted doll for the children to talk to about anything that may be worrying them.

This is a thriving group, and as Diane says, "We are a very happy group of ladies and enjoy a laugh and a chat!"

Barnet, London

Thanks to editor **Joy Wyndham** another excellent newsletter has arrived from the Barnet team revealing the continuing range and commitment of their volunteering activities.

SPRING TEA

As a thank you a wonderful Spring Tea was organised for members at the beginning of March.

Barbara Davis reports:

We didn't think we could do better than our summer party last year. But according to the volunteers who helped we really excelled ourselves.

About 40 guests came to Totteridge Village Hall (which is fast becoming our party venue) where a colourfully decorated hall, a vast raffle and groups of ladies attended to their every need. Roy Blass our entertainer provided a wide medley of sing-along songs and even managed to be play-



ing 'Singing in the Rain' when the heavens opened, or was it the other way round. While great quantities of tea, sandwiches cakes etc were being consumed, a Cha Cha was performed by the volunteers all wearing hand-made Easter bonnets.

*The raffle was drawn by **Gillian Jordan**, chair of the Barnet Providers Group. It seemed to go on forever but there were lots of prizes and few went home empty handed.*

This party is always lots of fun and a bit like the Lord Mayor's Show—you know how it should work but are not always sure that it will! However without the wonderful support from the volunteer helpers and drivers it just wouldn't be the same.

SCHOOL READING PROGRAMME

The Barnet schools volunteers get together annually to exchange views and enjoy a cup of tea together. At this year's meeting about 30 volunteers came together, and all said how much they enjoy working with the children. Although Bar-

net offer a reading programme it seems that the volunteers enjoy other aspects as well, such as taking part in school outings and helping with school productions among other things!

Barnet was pleased to welcome **Zoe Kirby** to the meeting. Zoe is the Reading in Schools National Development Worker for England, and part of her work has been monitoring the effect that RSVP schools volunteering has on the participants and on the pupils and schools involved. Members were asked to fill in a questionnaire which showed that not only did they enjoy being with the children but they also felt better in themselves for being active. Several of the Barnet schools who regularly take volunteers are asking if more volunteers could be available which is clearly a good indication of the positive effect the volunteers are having on the school.

Barnet are proud! Zoe was offering a prize for those across England who had completed and returned her questionnaire, and the first name out of the hat was **Lucia Christodoulides** of Barnet who won the £50 Boots Voucher.

An article by Zoe summarising her recent report on her project is on page 9 of this edition of FOCUS.

Citywise May Event

As part of Camden Council's Intergenerational Week celebrations, Camden Networkers and Citywise are joining together on **15th May** to organise an afternoon of intergenerational fun and games. Volunteers from a variety of cultural backgrounds will be sharing their traditional games. So grandparents, parents, children—come and enjoy activities together, relive your youth, learn what your parents got up to when they were young and take away some nostalgic memories or new games to teach your friends.

All are welcome to this free event!

Venue? Calthorpe Project, 258-274 Grays Inn Road WC1 X 8LH **Time?** 1.30pm-4pm

For more information contact **Sue** on sking@csv.org.uk or **Maria** on mco-trini@csv.org.uk.

Find out more info about the various activities throughout the week at:

www.camdenintergenerationalweek2015.org.uk
or Contact Vanda Carter Intergenerational O

East Dorset Birthday!

Romy Shephard reports:

On 10 March we celebrated the first birthday of the coffee morning we run for frail older people who aren't able to get out and about without help. The West Howe Coffee Morning was set up with a grant, principally to pay for the hire of St Philip's Church Lounge, from Bournemouth Borough Council. Most Tuesday mornings our volunteer drivers pick up our guests, help with coffees, chat with our clients, and then take them home again. Occasionally, rather than having coffee, we take our guests for an outing including lunch or a cream tea.

The project is ably run by **Angie Hook** who greets everyone with a friendly smile. For the celebration she had arranged the table with a beautiful embroidered cloth and a vase of daffodils, and we had a delicious party-sized chocolate cake (donated by Tesco) and even a 1st birthday balloon! A photographer from the local *Echo* turned up to record the special moment, and we took a few photos of our own.

West Howe is an area of Bournemouth that has many activities for families and young people, but there is much less laid on for the older generation. Our guests really appreciate this opportunity to go out for a social occasion, meet people their own age, make new friends, and to be treated with dignity and respect. For them it is a change of scene and something they look forward to each week, helping them maintain their interests and independence.

And the good news is—the Council has agreed to fund us for a further year!

Poole's Russian Sailors

Beryl Potter runs a small knitting group in Poole, and reports on a Christmas delivery:

St John's Church Knit and Natter Group sent a number of hats and neckbands to the collection point for the Mission to Seafarers at St James's Church in Poole. In February **Julie James**, a ship's visitor from the Mission, came to tell me how she had taken a lot of knitted hats and warm neckbands to the crew of a Russian ship docked in Poole and how pleased they were to have them. She also told me that a lot of the

ships, including the Channel Island ferries, are manned by Philippino sailors who definitely feel the cold, particularly when they come to our shores.

TWIGS

Another excellent newsletter from **Dee Hoy** about the many activities of TWIGS gardening clubs. National Libraries Day was celebrated at two venues, **Oakdale** and **Rossmore**. **Sue Cole** from Twigs of Oakdale reports:

The day started very cold. I had set up my table with a lovely floral cloth, nice and bright, to attract the people coming into the library. I aimed to instil and encourage parents to bring their children along to learn how to grow things.

You can still enjoy gardening even if it's in pots—it's still gardening and you have to think of what is going into them!

I did speak to a couple of ladies who garden with pots and a couple who have a garden plagued by squirrels. We all have our problems and hopefully all the people I spoke to on Library Day will come and talk to others in our group about the advice they need and the information they can share. The day went well and as far as I could see positive things should be coming out of this.



At Rossmore Library

Rossmore Library also hosted a tea tasting which Dee attended. As Dee said, "How many of us question where our tea comes from and what is the whole process from plant to shop shelf?" Besides the tasting, they learned "What the plant is, where it is grown, how it is processed for export. I learned a great deal in a very short space of time and also found a tea which I have fallen in love with and would be happy to drink all day!"

Congratulations Norfolk Knitters!

"A GROUP OF KNITTERS IS CELEBRATING TODAY AFTER RECEIVING £250,000 GRANT FROM THE BIG LOTTERY FUND"

*During February Norfolk Knitters featured on **BBC News** and local **Mustard TV** after receiving this amazing Big Lottery Fund grant, and under the headline above, this article appeared in the Eastern Daily Press. Many many congratulations to **Linda Brown** and her great team!*

When **Linda Brown** started the project by placing an advert in a local magazine about a knitting circle in her home in 2008 she did not expect it to grow into the social enterprise that it is today.

Ms Brown, a retired headteacher, said: *"People underestimate what retired women can achieve –our leadership group has a lifetime of experience across fields including teaching, law, nursing—and now runs a project which provides a lifeline for thousands of people."*

Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers has almost 2,000 members and more than 85 Knit and Natter groups across the county.

The members produce sacks of stitched items for local, national and international charities. Members have made items which are regularly sent to Syria, Sierra Leone, Ukraine and other areas effected by poverty, war and disease.



The Bungay Branch of the Norfolk Knitters will be exhibiting their work at the Norfolk Knitters Exhibition in Dereham in October, raising money for charity.



Shipham Knitters

They also support local charities and organisations and produce stock which can be sold in shops.

The group is part of Community Service Volunteers Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (RSVP) which runs and supports volunteering projects across the UK for people aged 50 and over tackling issues such as social isolation and improved health and wellbeing.

In 2013 the group was awarded £17,878 by the EDP's Big Lottery Fund for the work Knit and Natter undertakes.

Reading Project—Great Results!

The end of March saw the end of the RSVP Reading in Schools project funded by the Cabinet Office. This project focused on developing this great intergenerational activity in four designated areas across England – London (Hackney, Lambeth, Barnet), Redditch, Yorkshire and Bristol.

Zoe Kirby, Reading in Schools National Project Officer, looks back over the last few months.

I've really enjoyed working on this project. It's been great to meet lots of volunteers and some of the children they read with to get first hand accounts of how reading volunteering benefits both generations.

From our research, we have learned that our volunteers help children's reading age improve by **an average of 15 months in one school year**, in addition to chronological age gain – that's a huge difference.

Pupils also gave us great feedback. A high majority of children said that they felt that their enjoyment of reading (67%), and ability to read (61%) had definitely improved since they had been reading with their volunteer. And a resounding 79% said they definitely enjoyed reading with their volunteer. In a chat with some pupils in Lambeth, all four unanimously felt that their volunteer had helped them improve their reading skills, one calling her "an inspiration"!

Teachers could not sing our volunteers' praises highly enough. They talked about their "invaluable" help with "reading targets and confidence" and how much the children enjoyed reading with them. In fact, 100% of respondent teachers agreed that their CSV volunteer reader was a valuable resource to the school, and that they would recommend CSV's Reading in Schools project to another school.

We estimate that our volunteers, just in these four areas of England, contribute around 1035 hours per week—equivalent to nearly 28 full-time members of staff—and support around 2000 children.

Last but certainly not least, 88 volunteers fed back their views to us about volunteering via an online survey. Respondents said that their volunteering had given them a greater sense of purpose (88%), enabled them to enjoy life more (75%), and helped them to feel more positive about life (66%).

These statistics demonstrate the huge value of reading volunteering to everyone involved.

So what next for RSVP reading volunteering?

I would like to see the activity move into new areas of the UK where currently there is little or no reading help for youngsters, particularly in deprived areas. Loneliness is also strongly correlated with socioeconomic deprivation, and so this will target new older potential volunteers who could really benefit from what volunteering can give to them.

It has been a real privilege to work with some of our RSVP volunteers over the last few months. They really do make such a huge difference to the prospects of the younger generation. Long may they continue doing so.

Bournemouth Schools Success

Maddy Jackson, until recently Schools Organiser for Bournemouth, passed on this excellent feedback from Robert Kennedy, Head Teacher of St Michael's School, on the value of our volunteer readers:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the help you gave with the reading project the school ran last term. I thought you might be interested to know the results of the project that you supported.

We attempted to hear every child in Year 1 read every day for a period of six weeks with the help of adult volunteers and some Year 6 pupils. 60% of the children recorded an increase in reading age and 56% an increase in comprehension age. Also 80.5% of these pupils moved up at least one book band. This was compared with the progress of Year 2 pupils who didn't have the daily reading and showed its significant value added.

The Headmaster concludes, *As you can see, the time you gave up to work with our children made a significant difference to them and has given them an extra boost that will continue to benefit them well into the future.*

Maddy is delighted. As she said, *"It goes to show it really does make a difference!"*

Citywise and Deloitte

Citywise want to thank the team of Deloitte volunteers who facilitated an excellent interview skills workshop for our volunteers on Thursday 26th March. Our volunteers had nothing but praise for the wonderful support and advice they were given.



The Long Goodbye

Forgive my Chandleresque moment, but I'd just like to say goodbye to all my readers, as this is my last edition of FOCUS. I decided that I needed a change and a break from volunteering for a while.

I would like to thank everybody who has supported me as editor over the years, especially my contributors who provided regular and excellent copy. I got to know your projects so well and I wish you all the best of luck for the future. Given the changes to the charity, the rebranding and the arrival of the new RSVP manager, it is possible that FOCUS will have a rethink and reappear in another form. But in the meantime, please continue to send your great stories and news to **Amanda Francis** our Press and Communications Manager on **0203 780 5880** or **afrancis@csv.org.uk**

Goodbye and Best Wishes

Colin

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"Positive News"

POSITIVE NEWS is a publication dedicated to reporting positive developments. Their message is: *"We are doing invaluable work to influence and change the face of the news media—less doom and gloom, more news that leaves you and society enlightened and inspired."*

Currently they are in urgent need of a team of volunteers covering a whole range of skills—including design, marketing, sales, fundraising, web development—to work on a campaign to raise £250,000.

If you're interested please contact **Dan Harrison** on **dan@danharrison.net**

RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme) is part of Community Service Volunteers (CSV). CSV is a registered charity in England and Wales no. 291222 and in Scotland no. SCO39171. CSV is a company limited by guarantee no. 1435877.