

FOCUS

Volunteering Matters RSVP Newsletter
For Coordinators, Organisers and Volunteers
November 2017

Message from Emma



Hello everyone and welcome to the November edition of Focus. I can hardly believe I am typing those words! Where has 2017 gone?!

It was great to see so many of you at the recent South and North Conferences. You are all doing such great work for your communities, and it was wonderful to get everyone together to celebrate that. I personally learnt a lot more about what you do and what your challenges are. I am looking forward to us all working together more in 2018 and introducing you to our wider Volunteering Matters team, both staff and volunteers.

We discussed some serious topics at the conferences—data protection, safeguarding and

fraud. Do not worry if you couldn't attend or didn't quite get everything noted down—lots more guidance will follow in the coming months. Massive thanks to Tammy who did an excellent job of organising both conferences and keeping us all fed and watered, particularly in Newcastle! It really was very much appreciated. Further details are inside.

You will hear more about our upcoming Focus Weeks from Head of Communications **Alison Harvie**, who introduces them inside. They are a brilliant opportunity to showcase what we all do and to learn more about our other projects and programmes. We are kicking off with our Older People's Focus Week on 13th November, which looks at the work you do, so watch this space!

Tammy is taking a well-earned break in November. Remember to contact **Rachel Batten** or **John Maxwell** in Birmingham if you need anything. They are briefed and ready to help. They can be contacted on rachel.batten@volunteeringmatters.org.uk or john.maxwell@volunteeringmatters.org.uk or called on 0121 643 7690.

With thanks and best wishes

Emma

Director of Volunteering Delivery

North and South Conferences

Around 50 people gathered at our recent RSVP Conferences in Salisbury and Newcastle, and if the feedback forms are anything to go by, we can definitely say that they were a great success. At both events it was a similar packed agenda, focusing on some of the more practical aspects of being an RSVP organiser—fraud, safeguarding and data protection. But as most delegates mentioned, one key benefit of these conferences is the opportunity to meet and share experiences with other volunteers and organisers from around the UK.

Emma, our Director of Volunteering Delivery, welcomed everyone and introduced the sessions, and then Volunteering Matters Chief Executive **Oonagh** spoke about our current position and future opportunities. She was delighted to record a small financial surplus in our 2016/17 accounts though noted that *“funding is still fragile.”* However, her main message for the future was that Volunteering Matters is *“optimistic and ambitious”*.

Oonagh was pleased that safeguarding and data protection were key items on the conference agendas, given the importance that these issues would have in the coming year with the new regulations.



Happy faces at the South Conference in Salisbury.....

Oonagh also stressed the value of volunteering by older people both for recipients and the volunteers themselves. She quoted from a recent newspaper article about the corrosive effects of loneliness and how it was becoming a health issue—*“Chronic loneliness is cutting lives short.”*

In conclusion Oonagh looked to the future with her own ABC of ideas to focus on:

- A for having Ambition and for being Ambassadors for the charity
- B making best use of our Breadth of Experience
- C for Creativity in development.

Safety and Fraud

The figures show that there are tremendous levels of fraud in society which require a major effort to increase awareness. As has often been quoted, *“If an offer seems too good to be true, it is!”* The conference learned about the major programme to tackle fraud which was being rolled out across the UK and how RSVP can get the message out to the most vulnerable. As a Detective Inspector said, *“Rarely do we see physical violence associated with fraud. We do however see the significant psychological harm experienced by victims which can be just as devastating and difficult to overcome.”*



Iva Mary Cripps of Totnes being interviewed by the film crew

Conferences continued

Safeguarding

There was a wide-ranging discussion and debate about issues raised in the whole matter of safeguarding, using three different scenarios which groups were asked to discuss. Questions raised included whose responsibility it was to report possible safeguarding occurrences, when information should be passed on, levels of confidentiality, and the difference between physical safety and safeguarding—which were sometimes confused. The debates were lively and very informative.



.....and the North Conference in Newcastle

Data Protection Compliance

EU General Data Protection

Regulation, building on the current Data Protection Acts, comes into force in May 2018—regardless of Brexit—and **Fiona Brookes** of Adapta Consulting led a session on why this was important, key points of definition, and the new requirements. The key point being made was that data protection legislation was to defend the rights of vulnerable people—*“Companies and organisations have a duty to keep people safe and are not allowed to simply hand out or consult on personal information without proper care or an individual’s permission”*. There



Working on a safeguarding exercise, Yorkshire team in the foreground, Scotland team in the background

was considerable discussion on areas of risk and the practical steps which should be taken. Clearly breaching the codes would be against the law, but would also incur very heavy fines. In summing up **Emma** made it clear that all staff and volunteers would be given

further practical information on ensuring compliance before May 2018.

At the South Conference we were delighted to welcome a film crew from South Korea who were making a documentary on volunteering. They filmed some of the conference and interviews with Oonagh and several volunteers. Production Manager **Jeong Hoon Jang** commented, *“Thank you for inviting us to the RSVP conference. It is very interesting to us to see how you make so many good things happen. People want to help each other. Perhaps that is part of British culture. We do not have things like this. Thanks a lot for your time and great support.”*

Conferences continued

Finally, as mentioned, the feedback from the delegates was very favourable indeed—

A chance to meet people from other areas and share information.

Despite being dry topics, I found both the safeguarding and data protection sections very engaging and learnt important things. Lots of food for thought.

Meeting others and finding out about other projects was good.

Learning about other areas, and getting ideas which could be introduced in our area.

Good sessions on data protection and safeguarding.

Meeting new people and feeling part of the family.

The opportunity to hear Oonagh and Emma speak about the future and the bigger picture and to learn through debate some of the vital points we'll need to know about safeguarding and data protection.

It was made clear at both conferences that the issues of fraud and safeguarding would be addressed in more detail in future editions of FOCUS, and that as Emma made clear, all staff and volunteers would be given further practical information on ensuring data protection compliance before May 2018.

Be Inspired in Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes Organiser **Nima Pujara** was delighted at the success of the recent *Be Inspired* exhibition comprising artworks created by her volunteers. Nima had organised the event with the support of **Chris Onan** from RSVP Herts and Beds. “Everything went very smoothly,” said Nima. “The exhibition was awesome and the paintings were amazing. The Mayor of Milton Keynes bought one of the paintings. On Saturday we had about 130 people visiting.”

Tammy went along to the Friday launch and said, “It was a wonderful event. The artworks on display were beautiful and there was a lovely selection. The Mayor spoke and was very supportive of the group.”

Pictured right is Nima with the mayor, surrounded by examples of the artworks on show



We Would Like Your Help

A message from **Paul Buddery**, Volunteering Matters Director of Strategy:

The Government is working with the Centre for Ageing Better to look at how people aged 50 and above contribute to their communities. Volunteering is one of these ways. The Government is concerned that the number of people aged 50 and above who contribute to their communities seems to be declining, and it's worried that some groups of people feel more able to get involved than others. The Centre for Ageing Better is therefore asking for people's views.

Volunteering Matters wants to make sure that the experience and views of RSVP really count. The aim is that our contribution to the exercise will be largely compiled out of the responses of RSVP organisers, coordinators and volunteers.

Can you help? These are the questions that the inquiry is asking:

- What are your personal or professional experiences of community contributions in later life?
- What would you say are the main things that discourage or prevent people 50+ from making a contribution to their community?
- Do your responses particularly relate to the experiences of
 - People with lower incomes
 - People living with poor health, long term health conditions or a disability
 - Black, Asian or minority ethnic communities
 - Other
- What are the main things that support people who are 50+ to make community contributions?
- Are there examples of work to support other groups of people who may face barriers to making a contribution, learning from which might be relevant to people 50+ (e.g. working with disadvantaged young people)?
- Do we have examples of effective action with people 50+, and were they aimed at any particular groups?
- Anything else?

Would you like to submit an answer to any or all of these questions? You might want to consult with members of your group to get their views, or just write on the basis of what you've learned as a co-ordinator.

Our timetable is set out below. Your main contact will be **Duncan Tree**, our Head of Policy (Duncan.tree@volunteeringmatters.org.uk), who will be pulling the submission together. Please contact him if you're willing to be involved. He will be happy to advise or generally talk through the process if that's helpful.

I think this is a great opportunity to make an impact. I hope you can take part.

13 th / 14 th Nov	Invite RSVP members to contribute
24 th Nov	Deadline for responses. Please send directly to Duncan Tree at Duncan.tree@volunteeringmatters.org.uk
4 th December	Duncan circulates draft Volunteering Matters response, including comments from RSVP members
11 th December	Deadline for RSVP members to send any comments on draft response
14 th December	Volunteering Matters submit response to inquiry

'Focus Weeks' start with RSVP

Head of Communications **Alison Harvie** explains about the new 'Focus Weeks' initiative:

Over the next few months Volunteering Matters will be giving concentrated publicity over one week—a 'Focus Week' - to each of our four pillars of work in turn—that is older people, young people, disabled people and families. The first one in the spotlight is older people.

You should be receiving this edition of FOCUS at the beginning of Volunteering Matters Retired and Older People's Focus Week – where all eyes are on this key pillar, which involves the work you all do. During this week there are going to be events and media, all with the intention of raising awareness of the potential of volunteering for and with the over 50s. Keep an eye on the Volunteering Matters website, join the conversation using the #tag **volunteeringmattersforolderpeople**, and get in touch with your local Head of Region directly to find out more or to suggest how your local project could be included and publicised during the week.

We look forward to telling you all about what went on in the next issue of FOCUS.

TWIGS

Congratulations to TWIGS Garden Club in Poole who held a splendid Mini Fete at the end of September. As **Patricia Edwards** reports, *"The weather started off damp but nothing daunted we pushed ahead and at last a watery sun came out just as the event started. There were plants, there was knitting, there were handicrafts along with tea, coffee, cakes and quiches. Which were all very yummy! Not forgetting Bruce the Scarecrow with his 'Guess the number of sweeties in a jar' competition, and the cutest little hedgehog doorstep prize for our Gardener of the Year Sylvia Dodd."* Sylvia and Bruce are pictured below.

The social event club for the 'laid back' gardener

Twigs Garden Club
Poole ~ Dorset

MINI FETE

TOMBOLA

Woodstock Community Hall
Berry Road, Parkstone, Poole BH14
Friday 30th September
10.30am

tea & coffee available

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS
FOR RSVP

Beds & Herts Meeting



The Beds and Herts team, from the left—**Mary Newbery, Elva Nash, Ian De'ath, Walter Buckley, Tammy, Chris Onan,** and
Organiser **Jean Fadden**

Tammy writes:

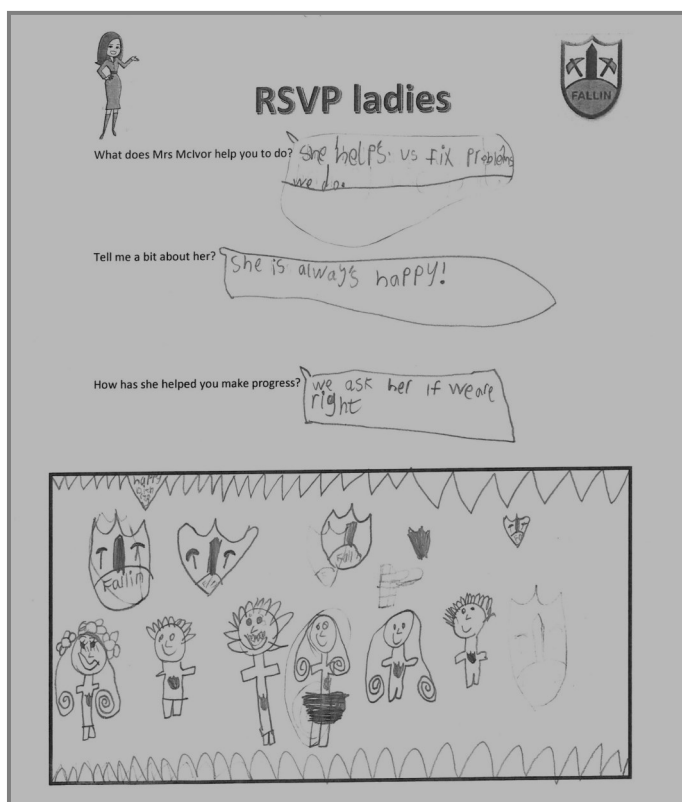
I was lucky enough to be invited to the recent Beds and Herts Organisers Meeting. This group has been running for many years, set up and led by **Jean Fadden**—readers may remember Jean speaking at the RSVP 20th Anniversary Gathering in 2008.

Beds and Herts' main activities currently include helping children with reading in schools, healthcare driving, helping isolated people get to medical appointments, and a network of housebound knitters who knit for charity, linked up by local volunteers who deliver wool and collect the knitted goods to donate to charity.

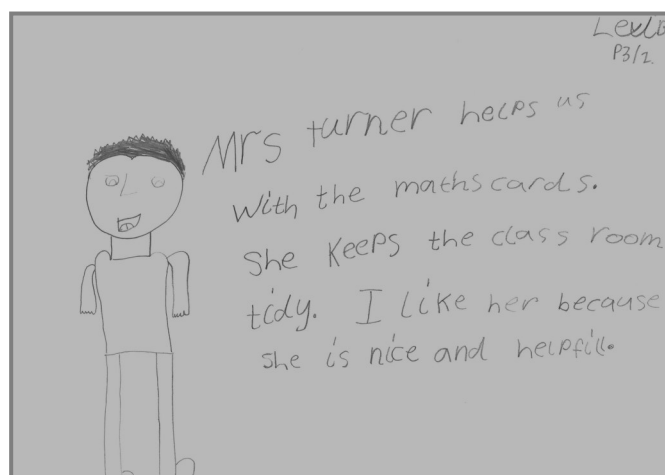
Like many groups around the UK, Beds and Herts are finding that volunteer recruitment is a concern. There was

much discussion on this issue and it was agreed that word of mouth really is one of the best ways to recruit. In FOCUS a couple of issues ago we included a challenge to everyone around the UK to tell two people about RSVP and spread the word. If you managed it and have had any success, **please do let us know! If you haven't tried yet, give it a go, maybe as part of our Older People's Focus Week!**

Forth Valley Schools



Margaret Ingle, Schools Project Organiser, Stirling, has sent us some delightful comments made by children about several of the schools volunteers. Aren't these wonderful?



Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers



As ever, organiser **Linda Brown** has lots to report on in her excellent newsletter. The last six months have seen some milestone events—many featured in previous editions of FOCUS—such as the recruitment of her 3,000th member, and the splendid afternoon in the Bishop of Norwich's garden in July. And plans are well advanced for the Spirit of Christmas Fayre to be held in Norwich at the end of November, as the poster below shows. Linda makes a particular point of stressing the value of what they manage to achieve. *"We're proud to help many of the disadvantaged in our society. Particularly touching are the stories from the refugees that we have in our county and it's wonderful to see the difference just small things can make to someone's life. Our groups are supporting local care homes, providing twiddle muffs for dementia patients, smoothie hats in aid of Age UK and many knitted and stitched items for children abroad. The quantity and quality of these items are wonderful and we are delighted to help so many."* Linda goes on, *"The Bishop's Garden event was a fantastic celebration of everything we do. Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers is about so much more than knitting and stitching for charity. It is also about the community we have created together, the help and support everyone is able to give each other and the pleasure we get from working together in a common cause."*



Linda reports that Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers is now supporting the City of Sanctuary scheme. City of Sanctuary is a movement to build a culture of

hospitality for people seeking sanctuary in the UK. Their goal is to create a network of towns and cities throughout the country which are proud to be places of safety where people seeking sanctuary can be helped to integrate into their local communities. As Linda says, *"We already send knitted goods to refugee camps and war torn hospitals. We've made hot water bottle covers as Christmas gifts for all our local asylum seekers and sent donations of sewing materials and equipment to groups at New Routes, the community centre for displaced people in the city, and The Grange, the retreat house in South West Norfolk. Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers are now supporting the City of Sanctuary scheme. We already have a reputation for being a very friendly organisation and our local groups are open and hospitable to all newcomers. We have made up a set of display boards which are travelling around the Wool Lofts to help us to understand the situation of our refugees and learn a little more about how to make them feel at home. The display visited Sheringham in July and socks and slippers were donated as part of our Christmas Appeal. They also donated toys and mouse bags for the new families arriving in Norwich later as part of the government scheme to resettle Syrians from refugee camps."*



Judith Cohen

Iva Mary Cripps writes:

It is with great sadness that I report the death of Judith Cohen on October 1st. Judith joined RSVP Devon as a volunteer in the mid 1990s and finally retired in 2015 as RSVP Ambassador for Devon. I say finally, as there were several occasions before reaching her 90th birthday when she announced her retirement. After the third bunch of flowers and a farewell tea party, she did step aside but continued to support all our projects. Her energy and drive in recruiting school volunteers, helping the Knit and Natter Clubs, raising on-going funds for Devon projects, plus securing the initial money towards launching Heather's Hair was inspirational. She will be sadly missed for her enthusiasm and friendship, but we are all privileged to have known her as a dear friend and RSVP colleague.



Judith (seated, second from the left) with some of her team

Emma writes:

I first met Judith in 2013 when I became the CSV Regional Manager for the South. Judith was the first RSVP co-ordinator I met and I remember being really impressed by the number of volunteers and activities she was supporting, and the length of time she had been involved with RSVP. Judith (and Iva Mary) gave me a warm welcome, and Judith was always generous sharing her time and knowledge with me. I was really sorry to hear that Judith had passed away. She was remembered fondly at the recent RSVP South Conference. Judith really was an RSVP legend and I know she will be greatly missed. Our thoughts and best wishes are with her family and friends in Totnes.

Former RSVP Director Denise Murphy writes:

Judith was a terrific RSVP volunteer organiser whom I worked with for many years. Her enthusiasm for volunteering directly, and recruiting and supporting others, was inspirational. She was a joy to know and the impact on all who met her was huge.

RSVP regional newsletters are available online in our DROPBOX. To sign up to the DROPBOX please contact Tammy Yugin:
tammy.yugin@volunteermatters.org.uk.

Or phone 020 3780 5886.

In addition, many of the stories featured in FOCUS also appear on the Volunteering Matters website and in social media channels like our Facebook page—

**facebook.com/volunteermatters
—always worth checking!**

Useful RSVP Volunteering Matters Contacts

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**For all FOCUS matters please contact
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